MORGAN'S MEN

Morgan's Men

Containing

Adventures of Stuart Schuyler

Captain of Cavalry during the Revolution

By

JOHN PRESTON TRUE

Author of "Their Club and Ours," "Shoulder Arms," "The Iron Star," "Scouting for Washington," etc.

Illustrated by

LILIAN CRAWFORD TRUE

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"There were giants in those days."

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FROM DRAWINGS BY LILIAN CRAWFORD TRUE

"'As the Lord lives, I 've seen that horse before, and you!'" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

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MORGAN'S MEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW COMMISSION, AND A HINT HOW IT WAS WON.

IN CONGRESS

The DELEGATES of the UNITED STATES of New Hampſhire, Maſſachuſetts-Bay, Rhode Iſland, Connecticut, New York, New Jerſey, Pennſylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, TO

Stuart Schuyler Esquire

WE, repoſing eſpecial Truſt and Confidence in your Patriotiſm, Valour, Conduct and Fidelity, DO, by theſe preſents, conſtitute and appoint you to be

Captain of Cavalry

in the Army of the United States, raiſed for the Defence of American Liberty, and for repelling every hoſtile invaſion thereof. You are therefore carefully and diligently to diſcharge the Duty of *Captain* by doing and performing

all manner of Things thereunto belonging. And we do ſtrictly charge and require all Officers and Soldiers under your Command, to be obedient to your Orders as Captain And you are to obſerve and follow ſuch Orders and Directions from Time to Time, as you ſhall receive from this or a future Congreſs of the United States, or Committee of Congreſs for that purpoſe appointed, or Commander in Chief for the Time being of the Army of the United States, or any other your ſuperior Officer, according to the Rules and Diſcipline of War, in Purſuance of the Truſt repoſed in you. This Commiſſion to continue in force until revoked by this or a future Congreſs.

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Philadelphia February 22de, 1780.

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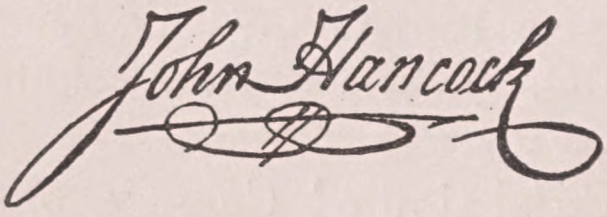

PRESIDENT.

ATTEST: Chas Thomson jun

STUART SCHUYLER, whose name appeared in the above document, had

read that before. More — he could repeat it word for word, mark for mark, down to the last period in it. Nevertheless he had to take it out and read it all over again as he rode along. A sturdy, broad-shouldered lad was he, with a cheery eye and smile, when the young face was not set with the lines of determination which life during the last three years of war had given to it in ordinary moments of repose.

No one at first glance would have credited him with the distinguished rank indicated in the commission which he was reading. He seemed altogether too young, too boyish, and his uniform — if it could be so called, as it mainly appeared to consist of a hat the worse for wear, breeches still more worn, and a deerskin hunting shirt which bore no war marks at all, after the tough nature of its kind — certainly had nothing of the officer about it. Yet you could not call him "just a country boy" of the period. There was a keen watchfulness about the eyes as they swept the vistas of the woodland. There was an alert,

erect, military poise to the body, which nevertheless yielded to the motion of the horse beneath it in that undulatory harmony that made the two seem but portions of a single frame; just such a harmony as you might expect in a centaur.

The black horse, Tartar, beneath the young rider, arched his neck and curveted coquettishly sideways, as though he too were intensely proud at that moment and felt that life was worth living. Tartar thus far had had a varied career. As a colt he was reared in Virginia. As a horse he had travelled to New York, the favorite steed of his owner.

Then came the war, and Major Banastre Tarleton had annexed him for his own, and the two thundered along over more than one road in hot pursuit of some fleeing continental. Then Tarleton, now a lieutenant-colonel, had taken ship for the far southland, and Tartar with him; and for Tartar's comfort unwisely he had annexed also a short, stout lad, who happened at the moment to be lingering about the wharf convenient for impressment.

Away through troubled seas they sailed, and Tartar had been supremely unhappy, finding life bearable only at meal times, and at one or two other stray moments when his horse-boy was doing his best to make him comfortable, thereby winning all the affection that a grateful horse could feel.

Then came the wild gallops over the sandy paths of the Carolinas; and presently his flight by night under that same horse-boy, who had brought him to Sumter's camp in safety, and now had been joined by a friend from the North who had been with him in that same New York in a stealthy scouting trip, who had shared in his good fortune of well-won promotion for the news sent back from thence, and who now had brought him his commission as reward. Why should not Tartar whisk his long tail in noble pride? At all events, he did.

Lieutenant Tom Ludlow of the continental army brushed a speck from his spotless uniform and eyed his superior officer with amused satisfaction as they trotted along under the oaks and tall pines that shaded

the road. Good comrades were they, made so by three years of marching and fighting as privates together; and they were not less likely to be friends now that they had moved up steps in the social scale.

Tom had not had his comrade's educational advantages as a boy, but contact with men of education was an education in itself, and there was a dignity to his speech, already, which went well with his uniform. The slang of a private foraging through the Jerseys would not do for the every-day language of a lad who might any day be interviewed by General Washington; and without saying a word to anybody he had been taking quiet notes of such matters and talking to himself in hours of solitude, with a result which already had been favourably commented on by his superior officers, and had led to his being intrusted with more than one important duty; and now here he was in the South, as one of the official family of General Nathanael Greene.

Nevertheless he was not too old to rejoice in the tingling crispness of the morning air as they rode along out of Sumter's camp,

where he had been on an official errand, and unexpectedly had found his friend just escaped from the British lines and a winter's masquerade; and with a boyish, impulsive motion he snatched off his hat and flung it high in the air, catching it on his fist deftly as it descended after an erratic flight and a momentary pause for reflection on a branch of pine. Pine cones smell much alike, North and South, and the place seemed homelike.

"My sentiments exactly, Tom!" said the young captain with a laugh, as he carefully folded up the commission again and restored it to his breast. "A good, hearty yell would be a relief. Let's give one!"

And a vulture soaring overhead craned his long neck until he nearly lost his balance as he curiously eyed those incomprehensible big birds below him who never flew but preferred to creep along so slowly across country down there, and yet could make such a far-reaching noise; and he gave an extra flap to his poised wings and sailed off rapidly to a quieter locality.

Then the two friends reached across space and for the fourth or fifth time that morning shook hands heartily, as boys of English race will, and settled down to talk things over in more decorous fashion. But what a number of things there were to talk about! Stuart had the siege and capture of Charleston to contribute for his share. Tom had Arnold's treason for his,—a matter which so stunned his comrade, who had looked up to that strong, undisciplined genius of a general with a sort of hero-worship second only to that which he felt for Washington, that for miles he had ridden onward in grief and silence. But the work of the world must be done each day, and there is no time to look backward in war; and presently the conversation awoke again and in more cheerful channels.

"One thing is rather odd, Tom," Stuart presently remarked, with a smile. "Here we have been fighting side by side for years and years. We tramped together through Connecticut, and around in New York, and except for the last trip together we footed it across the Jerseys; and at Stony Point

it was all foot-work. Yet when promotion came it sent us both into the cavalry, although I do not see that I at least ever gave any indication of shining as a horseman. How do you account for it?"

Tom Ludlow chewed away at an oak-leaf for a moment before replying, and reflected.

"It is odd, now that you mention it. But — perhaps — we have proved that we can get across country, both of us, rather better than some men; and staff-officers are needed who can ride, and carry orders, and be trusted. Now, I don't suppose that the General knew just how well educated you would be by this time, but took it for granted that nobody could be Colonel Tarleton's horse-boy long without learning how to stay on a horse, — and he knew of your 'promotion' to that post, for I told him of it myself, although I forgot to tell him that you had enjoyed the priceless advantage of early lessons in horsemanship from me. At all events he hit it about right, I see, as he generally does."

"I suppose that is it," said Stuart, thoughtfully, ignoring the jest in view of

the seriousness of the subject. "And I can tell you, Tom, that war down here is a different kind of war from what it is in the North. In the Carolinas the man who can ride has altogether the best of it. I've never seen Marion; but I've seen Sumter in battle, and felt him, too, when I was on the other side of the line before I could get away from the redcoats; and you can have no idea how that man managed to keep us awake o' nights! We never knew where to place him. He and his men were forever turning up just where they were not wanted, and were never round when Tarleton called, — save once or twice, when I hear he did catch some of them napping.

"I think they made the colonel quite unhappy among them. I know they did Colonel Webster of the 63d, — the regiment they put me in. He used to curse such war as that, till his officers had to go off by themselves to have their laughs out where it was safe. I wonder who rides Muskrat now. I don't envy the lad!"

"Your old horse?"

"Yes, if you could call him a horse. He

went on four feet when he did n't prefer two, and he ate grass when he could n't get a man 's ear, or some other horse's. I said once that I would give a good deal to trade him for Tartar, with Colonel Tarleton, but I never dreamed then that it really would come to pass, and I laughed enough for a year when I learned that the colonel, after our duel by moonlight, actually did ride back to camp on Muskrat while I was travelling north on Tartar. You served me well that night, old boy!" he added, patting the neck of the black, who reciprocated by a ringing snort of satisfaction and a skip across a rivulet.

Then for a change they started their horses into a swinging gallop, the animals squealing and kicking in the fresh air, which was as much a tonic to them as to their masters, and one would have thought the party off for pleasure instead of being on the grim business of a bloody war. Tom Ludlow could not help casting side glances at Stuart as they rode, marvelling as he did so; for he recalled the time, not so very long ago, when he himself had given his

comrade beginner's lessons in equitation; and he knew enough about the art to recognize that the pupil had far surpassed the master.

Far away among the pines once came the mellow note of a horn, to which Stuart turned a watchful ear, while a shade of uneasiness crossed his face. For some moments he was silent, then asked abruptly:

"How far is it from here to General Greene's, do you think?"

"Well, if I must talk in Carolina as the Carolinians do, I should say it is about two smart looks and a right smart chance beyond. In old Massachusetts we would call it about seven miles. Why?"

"I don't like cow-horns unless I know who blows them," was the sententious reply. "We would better push along."

Obedient to the hint of his rider, Tartar broke into a long, sweeping canter, the stride of which carried him over the road at a pace which made the other horse, good though he was, exert himself not a little to match; and for a couple of miles they rode in silence.

"You don't suppose that the British have got as far North as this, do you?" asked Tom, presently.

"There's no telling. I should not mind the British but for the tories. They are much like Sumter's men, — know the swamps well where they have lived, and so know how to get around swiftly in strange waters, and hence are not bad as guides for Tarleton. If there is a man on earth well hated by a Sumter man it's a tory. If there's a man on earth whom a tory will go miles to get off the earth it's a Sumter man. So if we should happen to fall into their hands just now, they would carry you off to show you to Tarleton in that pretty uniform of yours; while as for me, presently I should be turned into a pine cone on some convenient bough; or if they did not swing me up Tarleton would, — and on my word, I can't blame him when I think of his riding Muskrat!" — an irrepressible smile wreathing the lips in strange contrast to the stern words which so calmly had just come from them. "Ah, there is water ahead!"

There was, and a good-sized stream at that, so deep that it was a swimming matter, and they were not above stripping for the occasion, since riding in wet clothing is conducive to rheumatism, especially in October. Stuart wisely took his pistols from their holsters and held them high above his head as Tartar breasted the sluggish current and forged across, blowing the water from his nostrils in playful snorts.

"Those are fine weapons," said the lieutenant, admiringly, as he eyed them for a moment while they were readjusting their clothing.

"Are n't they, though!" — and Stuart handed one over for examination, adding, with a twinkle in his eye, "They were presents."

"No! were they, though? Who from?"

"From Tarleton. They came with the horse!"

"Hum! if I hear some fine morning that Tarleton really has caught and hung you, Captain, as you yourself said, I can't blame him. I don't know how you could contrive to get deeper in his debt. By the way,"

he added with a hesitating, rather sheepish look, "it occurred to me, Captain, that you 'd find it hard to find a uniform down here, if I should happen to find you; and, well — I thought — a pair of epaulettes don't take up much room, you know — so, I just brought some along for you in my pocket to match the commission. We might put them on your hunting shirt now."

Stuart coloured like a girl, in spite of his tan. He had felt the inappropriateness of his costume alongside of his well-equipped comrade.

"I suppose it would be as well to wear them," he said, after a moment's thought; and Tom drew them from his breast pocket and adjusted them to the sturdy shoulders before him with more satisfaction than if they had signified his own promotion. It was wonderful what a difference those two simple ornaments seemed to make in the boy's whole appearance. Bright, new, gleaming as they were in their freshness, they made the rest of the costume appear especially soldierly and businesslike, as

though planned for the stern use of war, for which indeed it was well fitted. And it made his whole appearance not unlike what we now know as an officer in khaki uniform.

But it was time to mount and proceed; and without undue delay for admiration purposes Stuart gently hinted that it would be advisable to lose no further time; and presently his caution seemed justified, for Tartar suddenly halted opposite a thicket and pricked up his ears. Tom started, and looked keenly thither, while Stuart bent suddenly forward over his horse's neck. A second later, as it seemed, with no more noise than would be made by the flutter of a bat's wing, a huge man in buckskin darted out of the thicket and grasped Tartar's bridle with one hand, while his rifle was covering Tom.

"Dismount, you!" he said gruffly. Then he stopped speaking, with an odd gasp, for the rider of the horse which he had arrested so unceremoniously had made a little motion, — apparently just a little quiver of a motion, but he was well down behind the

high-raised neck of the horse, out of range from the thicket in that second, — and the gruff arrester was in range of a cavernous black muzzle, from behind which had come two steely clicks, and back of that these encouraging words: —

"Friend, this is a hair-trigger, — surrender!"

CHAPTER II.

IN THE CAMP OF GENERAL GREENE.

"SURRENDER!"

That is a remark which, the world over, is treated with respect when backed up by sufficient weaponry; and, as a rule, when the respect is not accorded, some one is apt to regret it. This information is not new. Doubtless it was old in the time of Goliath. And Goliath himself had reason to regret that he failed to recognize the merits of a sling as an equalizer of forces when in the hands of a David.

Such being a law of war, Stuart Schuyler had every reason in the world to expect respect for his command, and was therefore considerably disconcerted when it was met by a fit of immoderate laughter on the part of the gigantic individual who was so inconsiderately holding fast to his horse's bridle; but beyond a single flash of an eye-

glance toward the thicket in search of some possible reason for this unseemly levity, his eyes only took on apparently a yet brighter keenness, and the long barrel of his right "saw-handle" was unswerving in its steadiness.

"Don't fire, Captain!" cried Tom Ludlow, hastily. "It's the Colonel — beg pardon, General Morgan!" And he respectfully saluted the prisoner, if such he might be called.

Stuart's face remained unchanged in its stern, set duty-lines; but quietly elevating the muzzle to a safer poise, he uncocked his pistol, returned it to its holster, dropped lightly from the saddle, and stood at attention, the huge bulk of the new-comer towering over him as he eyed him curiously. The captain was not tall, to begin with; and he now seemed shorter than ever as he stood before the giant, whose green uniform, though businesslike, yet wore an air of newness as though fresh from home.

The big man nodded approvingly, and stepped lightly backward a pace or two with the lithe, velvet-footed softness of a

panther, to where he could get a fair look at both his new acquaintances, eying them with swift, scrutinizing glances which seemed to take in every item of their uniforms and characters at one and the same time.

"Where are you boys from?" he asked, turning to Tom as the last speaker.

The lieutenant, thus directly accosted, dismounted and came to attention in his turn, in punctilious obedience to military etiquette, saying, —

"We are from Sumter's camp, General, with return despatches for General Greene."

"Oh, indeed! They must be important, sir, to require two officers to carry them," was the bantering reply, which made Tom colour underneath all his tan as he added, in some confusion: —

"I am the despatch-bearer, sir; this is Captain Stuart Schuyler, who is on his way from Sumter, where he is not needed, to report to headquarters, where he may be needed."

"Oh, that is the case, is it? Well, I

won't detain you long. I happened to be strolling this way, and concluded to surprise you a little, just by way of keeping my hand in" — and he broke into a laugh like a boy overflowing with animal spirits.

"Yes, sir, we were properly surprised," the lieutenant replied, a little drily, whereat the scouting general laughed outright again.

"Well — no, I can't say that you were, justly; I fear I shall have to apologize to you, my silent friend," — turning to Stuart, who thus far had not spoken a word save his original command, — "but seeing a couple of particularly brilliant and new epaulettes mounted on a pair of weather-beaten shoulders clad in buckskin, I concluded to see for myself which was the leading sign when it came to business. I'm free to confess, Captain," he added with a smile, "that the buckskin came to the fire in a fashion which was eminently satisfactory. Faith! I was not at all sure but that I would be marched back to camp as a prisoner at the muzzle of a pistol."

"The buckskin has seen service, sir,"

said Stuart, modestly, "but the straps are but one day old on my shoulders."

"Ah! how is that?"

"I have been in the service for about three years, sir, but as captain only for a few days."

"Not quite so, Captain, if you will excuse me," said the lieutenant. "You will find that your commission dates back to February;" at which it was Stuart's turn to colour. The general glanced from one to the other, but seeing no explanation was forthcoming and that the youthful captain was a trifle discomposed, he forbore to press the matter. But, feeling a slight tug at his sleeve, he turned suddenly and caught Tartar in the act of nibbling gently at the green uniform.

"Ah, you beauty! I watched you as you came along and wished I had a regiment mounted on just such horses. I have n't seen a better mount for a year" — stroking the velvet muzzle. "You don't want to sell him, do you, Captain?"

"No, General; it is my hope that I shall need him in the service."

"Well, if you intend to do courier duty like the leftenant, here, I can see that there will be no time lost on the way, but I had thought from the buckskin that your line of work would be more on the skirmish line. Still, messengers are necessary, of course, and it is well to have them properly mounted. But proceed with your despatches, gentlemen. I shall see you later, no doubt, and will try to bear you in mind when in need of couriers."

The general stepped back and watched with the look of an expert as both lads ignored their stirrups and vaulted lightly into saddle. He followed them with his eyes as they cantered away, saying to himself as he did so: —

"Now, where have I seen that short fellow before? The leftenant I know. He came South with Greene. The other seems to have been South already, for he apparently was picked up with Sumter and brought along. He rides like a Southerner, too; but he does n't talk like one. He dresses like a swampman, but he is n't one. My lad, I must keep an eye on you, I fear.

— And yet, how prompt the fellow was! How long was he in getting out that prodigious pistol, — a regular duelling tool, now I think of it! — and bringing it to bear? Not five seconds, I 'll swear, if it was that. If it had been real war between us, I am not sure but what for once I would have had to yield. That was the buckskin part, for it is as clear as the sun that he has seen service. But then, again, ordinary troopers don't ride blooded horses nor carry saw-handles as holster pistols, nor use the king's English like gentlemen!" and the experienced rifleman, who rarely made a mistake in his man, shook his head slowly, while a doubtful frown corrugated his massively handsome brow.

"Let me see," he continued musing, "that salute, now, — a swampman would n't give that so cleanly cut — if he gave it at all. He might be the son of some planter, however. No, that can't be! There 's no mistaking the air of a lad who has lorded it over niggers. Whatever else he is, he is n't that! Well, then, that salute, again. For a lad who has confessedly been scout-

ing with Sumter, it smacks altogether too much of the regular. Yes, he is altogether too well drilled. He could not have executed it better if he had come straight from one of the British pipe-clayed regiments of the line.

"Hum! possibly he did! — for that would explain many things. A deserter? No," — and again the sagacious old Indian fighter shook his head as he so patiently threaded this unknown trail. "A son of some well-born family would never desert to us. He would have too little to gain by it, as yet. But — he might — desert with the consent of his captain! Take Jack André, for example. That sort of people we call spies, and hang them as spies when we catch them. Now if this young fellow has crossed the lines with a view to getting back again to Cornwallis as André came out from Clinton — well, he stands as little chance of getting back again now," — and the general absently ran his finger along the hollow in his cheek which marked the path of an Indian's ball long years ago. He had resumed his walk, and was threading the

forest with noiseless tread, casting an alert eye to the right and left in spite of his meditations; and in due time, remembering his errand and finding a place to his liking, he dropped into ambush, and presently the inquisitive "Yep-yep!" of a wild turkey sounded through the woods, which was answered faintly from a distance.

"Yep — yep — yep!" came the call again, so soft and persuasive that where was the turkey that could resist the invitation?

"Yep — yep — yep — yep!" came the reply, nearer than before. Then presently the report of a gun echoed loudly through the forest, after which all was still. And in the proper season the headquarters' mess discussed turkey-bones and complimented General Greene on having so efficient a volunteer quartermaster in the person of their accomplished backwoods general, whose love of the chase sometimes took him far afield.

But that came afterward.

Meanwhile Stuart and Tom rode rapidly onward to make up for their brief delay.

"So that is General Morgan, is it?"

remarked Stuart. "I thought he was a colonel."

"So he was till a little while ago; but he has been promoted, as he ought to be. He 's a great fighter and a dead shot, I can tell you. You 'll like him, I know."

"I dare say; but it will be more to the point if he likes me, I imagine," laughed the other. "He 's a tremendous fellow, in size. I had to look right up at him. He makes me think of Ethan Allen."

"So he does," assented the lieutenant. "I saw Allen once, myself. But Morgan is different. He used to be full of the old Harry, playing off all sorts of practical jokes like a great boy. But he 's sobered down some, now, — although his trying to surprise us is just like him. I was mortally afraid, though, that you would blow his head off before I could get in a word, and I guess the general himself was n't prepared for quite such an ending to his surprise party," — and Tom laughed softly to himself.

"I generally know what I 'm firing at before I shoot," was the reply to that.

"Yes, I know, and that's all very well. But when a man is jumped out at like that he might be excused if he shot first and inquired afterward what it was all about. Ah! there's the camp."

It was clear that the effects of the reign of Gates were not yet over, for no outpost halted them as they drew near. However, to make up for that omission in discipline, a body of fully eight hundred men was manœuvring about in a little plain under the commands of officers who seemed to have shouted themselves hoarse in the effort to decrease the mistakes and increase the efficiency of their pupils. Not a man in sight was exempt from the drill, unless one mounted officer might be excepted, and even he was watching the work with a keen intensity; now sending an aide flying off to some distant battalion with an order, now personally halting some squad and supplementing its officer's instructions by an explanation; while now and then as the men rested for a moment on their arms a group of leaders were called together and stood respectfully before their

commander-in-chief, listening to his criticisms of the drill and his orders for the next essay.

The men were drilling with spirit. They moved promptly if unevenly at command, and the entire force seemed to be animated by a single desire, — to perfect itself in the drill at the earliest moment possible. Stuart watched them with the eye of an expert.

"Those men are doing well, Tom. It isn't as clean work as our regiment up North used to do" — what soldier ever does find a regiment which can drill as well as his own old one! — "but it compares very well with the 63d, and is better than the tories used to show when I saw them last. Not but what they had good men among them, however. Major Ferguson's command was as good a company as one will see in a long day's ride, and it was wonderful luck that they came to grief at King's Mountain. I saw them start out, and happened to be present when the news came about them; and it made a great sensation in the British ranks. They'd

had nothing like it, I believe, since Burgoyne. But there's your chance, Tom! They've come to a rest, and the general is looking."

Stirring up their horses a little they moved across the plain, Stuart presently drawing rein and allowing his friend to present himself alone.

A few minutes later, in obedience to a sign, he found himself for the first time before the general.

"You have some message for me, Captain?" asked the latter, with a glance at the exceedingly businesslike attire of the young man before him and a half-smile at the brightness of the badges on his shoulders.

"Not exactly, General. I am Stuart Schuyler, formerly in the ranks of a Massachusetts regiment of infantry, but now promoted to be a captain of cavalry, and as yet unattached. I beg leave to present myself for orders. Here is my commission, sir."

The general looked him over thoughtfully.

"Just now we have no cavalry, unless we count in Morgan's riflemen. Sumter, Lee, and Marion are all far from here with their troops. But no doubt we can find a use for you. What can you do?"

It was rather a blow to Stuart. He had looked forward for many hours to being placed at once in command of a slashing troop of hard-riding men, such as he had been consorting with of late "on the other side." But he had come to the camp with the aim, first of all, to make himself useful. So with scarcely a pause he pointed toward the nearest squad of resting men, saying: —

"I know my drill, General. I can help at drilling others."

"Good!" — and the general looked his pleasure. "We need drill-masters, for we are all too few. I see you rode in with Mr. Ludlow, and he will introduce you to the rest of us. This way, please, Mr. Ludlow! — Introduce the captain to his comrades, and present my compliments to Colonel Fairfax and ask him to assign a company to him for drilling. That is all,

gentlemen. I shall see you both to-night at dinner."

With that he turned away, already deep in thought over his problem of making a few do the effective work of many.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT CAPTAIN STUART SCHUYLER "COULD DO."

"WHAT can you do?"

After all, that generally is the first question asked a young man in this part of the world when he desires to enter into a new life. Not "who was your great-grandfather?" nor "how deep is your purse?" but the plain, blunt query quoted above; and on the answer depends what the questioner thinks that young man is worth.

Stuart Schuyler had plenty of common sense, and the question did not trouble him in the least; but his comrade, Tom, after meditating awhile as they walked away, burst suddenly into a fit of laughter.

"If the joke is so good you ought to give me a chance to laugh, too," remarked Stuart, presently, when he had deemed

that the merriment had been carried far enough.

"Why, here we 've been looking forward to positions in some fine cavalry regiment, — at least I have," he interpolated, with ingenuous honesty, — "and after three years of foot drill here we are at it again just where we left off."

"Well, not exactly, Tom. It 's the other side of the shield, now."

"The what?"

Tom was not well read in the classics, and the allusion puzzled him.

"Did you never hear of the two men who stopped to look at a statue bearing a shield, one of whom called it silver, while the other swore it was of gold?"

"No. What happened?"

"Oh, they fought it out, until they had put each other out of action, after which they found out that the shield had two sides, like most things that haven't more. We had the silver side as privates long enough; now we will have a chance to try the other."

"Hum!" precious little silver have I seen, my friend, for many a month past,"

and Tom pulled out a handful of scrip which in those days did duty as money — as far as it went — and eyed it with great disfavour. "I hope the 'other side' you speak of will at least be more productive."

"War-making is n't a mercantile profession, exactly, I admit. But neither of us went into it for profits of that kind, so we have no particular reason to feel disappointed. If we get through it and keep our heads on our shoulders, we two at least ought to be well satisfied."

"Do you really suppose Tarleton would hang you if he caught you?" asked the lieutenant, a little soberly for him. He had not seriously taken that point of view before.

"Have n't a doubt of it," said the captain, cheerfully. "Why should n't he? In his eyes I am just a deserter. If he learned that I went into New York as a spy when he had the luck to pick me up, that would simply increase his satisfaction at bringing my earthly career to a sudden end. I tell you, Tom, war down South — is war. You thought Stony Point was war, no doubt, when we went like a whirlwind across that

causeway through the night, bayoneting every man we met. But what happened when they cried for quarter? We just stopped.

"Now, my lad, I learned one thing down yonder which it will be well for you to learn likewise, in such fashion that it will not be forgotten. If you find yourself in a tight place and your commander or your comrades are calling for quarter, never you mind whether the enemy be Tarleton or tory, see to it that you let the other men do the calling. Your business just then is to fight your level best; and if it has got so far, to cut your way out. No matter what the risk, take it. If you fail, you won't be the worse off; and you may win your way out."

"I can hardly believe that matters can be as bad as that," said Tom, incredulously. "We have always given quarter up North, have n't we?"

"Generally, yes, — although I am afraid we were a little slow to hear sometimes when we got among the Hessians. Our men had no love for fellows who fought

against them just for hire, and speaking a foreign tongue at that. Also when it came to be a case of skinner and cowboy men were apt to stop when their knives were red, and not before. Now that 's exactly the case down here. There are whole regiments of tories. Marion's men were their neighbours, once. I understand that they were rough neighbours, too. When a man ties up his slave and cuts him into mince-meat with a whip for running away, 'to encourage the others,' it is n't likely that he himself will get more tender-hearted because of the occurrence, whether he does the whipping with his own fair fingers or with an overseer's, or stands by and sees it done on some neighbour's plantation."

"It seems to me, Stuart, that you ought to let the general know just how matters stand between you and Tarleton. It may serve to keep you out of trouble."

"No, that won't do!" replied the young captain, quickly. "He has trouble enough on his hands, now, to reorganize Gates's army, and that 's business enough for any general; and it 's our duty to help, not to

hamper him, and to go where he orders. And just now my orders are — to drill those men over yonder."

Stuart lost no time in getting Tartar well cared for, and in bestowing his few belongings in a brush camp which his experienced eye informed him was reasonably rainproof, although otherwise hardly bearing out the assertion of its other occupant — Major Burnet — that it was the most comfortable residence in the South. The major had kindly welcomed his new comrade, offering him the hospitality of his shelter, and eventually came greatly to like the silent young fellow who had dropped among them apparently from nowhere.

It was with mingled feelings that the young captain took his stand the next morning for the first time before his company, in obedience to orders. His voice had a tendency to sound small and far away, to himself at least, when he gave an order; and it was a singular sensation to have one hundred pairs of eyes all focussed on him and watching his slightest motion,

staring out of faces smiling, faces frowning, all contemptuous and forbidding. The men resented his appointment, this stranger from nowhere. That was as plain as a pikestaff. It interfered with promotion among them, and it was likely that there would be trouble ahead.

But this obvious fact acted rather as a spur than otherwise to Schuyler, and his mouth clamped together with a snap as he stood coolly eying the half-defiant attitudes of the men for some seconds after the colonel had left him subsequent to their halt just there before the waiting troop. Man after man he silently scanned from head to foot, singling out as by instinct the leaders, the bolder spirits, who would be likely to come to the front in any trouble, whether it be a mutiny or a charge. Man after man they felt those keen eyes boring through and through them, as though reading their very souls; felt them, grew uneasy, fairly squirmed, and drew unconscious sighs of relief when the scrutinizing orbs passed to the next. And each man thus dealt with forgot to

think further in regard to the youth of the officer who had just eyed him down.

On one or two the eyes rested longer than on others. They needed it. But the result was exactly the same. The iron will dominated the weaker ones — weaker because they knew they were in the wrong. Nobody knew anything about hypnotizing then, either as a name or as a science. As a result, that is not so certain. An aged Scot, who loafed in the ranks, felt himself slowly stiffening up, losing his slouchiness, assuming the attitude of the guardsman that he once was, back in the old country; and that, too, with every possible intention to do exactly the contrary; and when he found himself left poised mentally in that attitude of obedience where he had expected to stand insubordinate, he gazed dourly straight before him, and muttered to himself as much as to his neighbour, hardly knowing, in truth, that was speaking, —

"Mon, mon, yon lad is no canny!"

"'Tention!"

With what a sharp, keen ring the order came! and they stood "attention," too,

every man! They knew the commands — that much had been taught them. Now for the first time they knew what it meant to obey them with the snap and unanimity so dear to the commanding officer ruling over all, whose regiment is made up of just such units, and is effective or not in accordance with their unanimity. Long ere the morning's work had ended Stuart became conscious through the back of his head that General Greene himself had halted his horse behind him and was silently watching the progress of the drill, but no waver of his eye betrayed it. He kept his men as steadily under guard as a trainer in a lion's den keeps watch on his treacherous charges.

If a man failed in promptness he felt those eyes boring into him on the instant, although he was but one among a hundred; and the next order found him up to the mark. If he failed because he did not understand — and some few of the orders were more or less new to one or two, the captain seemed to know by intuition that it was a case for tuition, and gave it, accordingly, in words

surprisingly few, yet not one word too few. And that error was not repeated soon by that man. Then presently the soft thud of a horse's hoof came to Stuart's keen ear as the sound sprang into being, and then ambled slowly into faintness as the general moved away to some other company without a word. Yet in some occult sympathy between man and man he read in the expressions of the faces in line before him that the general had nodded his satisfaction as he rode away. After which presently, in all official sternness indeed, up cantered Lieutenant Ludlow, with —

"General Greene's compliments to Captain Schuyler, and he finds the captain's company so forward in its drill that he wishes it excused from further drill until four o'clock this day."

To which with unmoved countenance Stuart of course replied: —

"Present Captain Schuyler's respects to General Greene and his company's thanks for the commendation, and inform him that his instructions have been obeyed." Then wheeling, —

"Attention! The drill is ended. Break ranks."

And the next thing was a spontaneous and hearty cheer from the aroused men. "Hurrah for the little captain!"

It paid to obey orders, after all. And they went off to their quarters in huge contentment as they watched from the shade their less fortunate comrades still working away in the hot sun out in the open.

"The little captain's" company, indeed, was looked upon with envy by many an eye in the days that followed. Officers watched the drill in more or less hopelessness as they recognized how far their own companies fell beneath its excellence, and made invidious comparisons between the quality of its men and their own, to the disparagement of the latter. The men, like most soldiers, thinking only of the present and careless of the future, grumbled secretly because they were not favoured with long resting times, and were sullen under the beratings of their drill-masters, yet were roused to emulation by the example and

the good results of it — to the men. But the captain's work did not end there.

The drill was ended, and the men had gone off to their quarters, as stated; but the captain went too. It did not take his experienced eye long to see many a defect in their comforts. That shelter was built in a hollow. It gave headroom, surely, but would be afloat in the next rain; — and its occupants instantly were ordered to dig a drain around it. This one — did the men know which way the wind here generally blew? No? "Look over yonder, then, and see which way all those trees on this still day are leaning, all in one direction, too. Tear that shelter down, and face it the other way. What is that offal doing in that corner? Don't you know what buzzards are for? Carry it outside the lines at once, where the birds can get at it." And presently the shadow of a pair of broad wings drifted like a cloud across the campground. What were the company's cooks doing, in the grove beyond? Could n't they tell by the odor that the meal in that kettle was burning, and needed more water?

"Here, you; run over there and tell those cooks that if they burn that mush they'll get no dinners till they've eaten every ounce of it themselves!"

And the man addressed dropped his gun on the brush heap that served as his bed and went off as though shot from a cannon, — and whatever emphasis he may have added to the order in its transmission, it is certain that there was a startlingly sudden activity among the cooks that watched the fire. It is one thing to be too lazy to add water to mush that is to be eaten by other people; it is quite another thing to have to eat burned cornmeal one's self; hence white steam speedily arose from the swinging kettle, and the men in the camp grinned, while now and then one slapped his thigh with enthusiastic emphasis. This was "regular" work beyond a doubt. What militia captain cared for such details?

Then the officer halted before a shelter, half-filled by a tumultuous heap of boughs. "Whose place is this?"

"Mine, Captain," — and a man stepped forward, saluting respectfully. He would

not have dreamed of doing that a few hours ago.

"Take out those boughs." The man did so.

"Let the sergeants and corporals come here." A silent group of mystified men came forward and stood in line.

"Now, you," — turning to the private, — "take those larger boughs and thrust their butts into the sand, with the curve upward. That 's it; now another line, a few inches back, with the twigs overlapping the others — that 's it; now keep on, till you 've made it look like a shingled roof. I 'll guarantee that you will sleep soft to-night. Now, sergeants, you have seen how a camp bed should be made, — I am surprised to find that such a lesson was necessary. To-morrow morning I shall expect to find every bed in the company made like that, and shall hold you responsible for it. That is all," and, his inspection over, he turned to leave.

"Excuse me, sir," said one of the men, a tall, broad-shouldered, intelligent-looking fellow. "Will the Cap'n pardon me for

askin' whar he larned so much about camp life? None of the other officers know any more 'n we uns do, so we 're mighty satisfied with ourn, but kinder cur'us."

The captain smiled, and when he smiled he looked young again.

"I had three years of it, as a private, my man."

"Good lord!" ejaculated the soldier, staring, then recovering himself. "Well, the Cap'n will find, I reckon, that this comp'ny 's goin' to 'bey orders."

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT TWO GENERALS THOUGHT OF A CAPTAIN.

IT was the custom of the general every morning to hold a little conference with his officers when his correspondence permitted, — although, to tell the truth, that same correspondence took up a deal of his time; for commanding an army is not ended when the sword has been hung on the tent peg for the night; and scouts must be interviewed, despatches must be read, replies must be written, persuasive and pacifying letters must be most carefully thought out for sending to distant officers who are jealous of each other and are disinclined to pull together, — a thing which is more apt to happen, perhaps, in an army of semi-independent commands than in any other; although even a regular army corps is not always free from it. Let no man or

boy who reads this aspire to be a general unless he is also willing to write or read and indorse papers by the hundred and do all the work of government besides.

But at these little business assemblies Stuart Schuyler met and learned to know many of his fellow officers, and found them for the most part to be very polished gentlemen. Naturally, as the youngest among them, he kept modestly in the background, expressing no opinion on matters which came up because no one asked for it; listening to his instructions with a silent intentness which lost no part of them, and obeying them in due time without comment.

But this was an army of freemen, and the officers were no less free, and therefore no less given to habits of discussion than volunteers fresh from farm and town-meeting. Hence the possessor of so strictly military a habit was made rather prominent than otherwise by that very reticence; and more than once Stuart was conscious that the burly Morgan was eying him in an indefinable manner, as though meditating a variety of things, both compliment-

ary and the contrary. And once as he left the assembly and turned his steps toward his company he heard Morgan ask, —

"What do you know of that young fellow, General?"

The reply, of course, he did not hear. But the question itself gave him reason for considerable cogitation.

The answer, had he heard it, might have given him more.

"I know very little, General," Greene had said. "Merely his word, his work, his commission. Why do you ask?"

"His word might be false, his work a mask, his commission forged," replied Morgan, sententiously.

"Why do you think so?" — and the commanding officer looked up with a startled air.

"I did not say I thought so, sir; only, it might be so. But I will admit that the lad puzzles me."

"Well?"

"He is too young for his work."

"But he seems to know his duty; I believe we have no better drill-master."

"That is what I mean, sir. He knows it altogether too well for his age."

"Oh! However, that is hardly to be regarded as a fault, is it?" — and the elder general smiled a little at his stalwart junior, and sought a more comfortable angle in his camp-chair.

"I am not so sure about that," came the reply slowly. "I know only one place where small boys are made officers and so have such education when they reach where he is now — the British army."

"I don't know about that, Morgan!" said the general, quickly. "He is no backwoodsman, of course, — excuse me! we can find no fault with backwoods which give us Morgans," he interpolated, with a genial smile, — "and it would not surprise me to find that he is city bred. We get excellent results sometimes from lads whose wits have been quickened by hard study, until they have learned how to study when they have to take up some new life. I see nothing British about him, myself."

"Nor do I," was the reluctant reply, — "at least, as yet."

"Well, what then?"

"I suppose it is the mystery that puzzles me, really. There are not many men who can hide their trail when once I am on it, or catch me in ambush. Perhaps Indian warfare has made me overprone to suspicion, also; but I must confess I would prefer to see an André in every man whom I cannot fathom, rather than find one André, too late, in some one whom I had deemed too insignificant to notice. When the Iroquois are abroad, General, we don't overlook a broken twig because it happens to be small."

Greene smiled indulgently.

"While young Schuyler can hardly be called an insignificant twig, — indeed, I believe he is one of our very best drill-masters, and is bringing his company into shape with wonderful speed, — nevertheless I imagine General Morgan would find it an easy task to break him if found crooked after all."

"I don't know about that, either. He never offers an opinion, I notice, — perhaps because none has been asked, — but a

quicker-witted fellow does not live under American sky. I had his horse by the bridle in a fashion that would shake the nerve of a veteran; yet before I could open my mouth for a word I was looking down the barrel of a pistol. He thinks, — quick, and to the point. Yet he says nothing. What becomes of those thoughts of his? They must go somewhere."

"Ah, Morgan, that goes too deep into philosophy for me to follow. Who can say where our unspoken thoughts do go? But to sum up you would say, —

> Yond' Cassius hath a lean and hungry look;
> He thinks too much: such men are dangerous, —

would you not?"

The hardy backwoodsman laughed.

"That is Shakespeare, is it not? Something of the sort is in my mind, I grant; although when it comes to fatness, the camp is full of Cassiuses. Well, perhaps I am utterly wrong; but I venture to suggest that when another assembly meets you ask his opinion casually on some subject and try to draw him out a little. I should like a few more signs on the trail before I

try to identify his totem. Snapshots are good enough if it is a case of then or never; but a clear range and a steady aim is what the hunter counts on to keep the camp in venison. But I have taken too much of your time with this, already. Now about the mountain men. I believe Otho Williams is the very man to raise a company, and they are bound to be good shots, all. That was where Ferguson had no chance at King's Mountain. The men went up the slope as though they were out on a squirrel hunt, and whenever a tory eye squinted around a tree-trunk the bark flew pretty near it. We want born riflemen for work like ours when powder's scarce."

"You know these men, Morgan," said the general, earnestly. "Why cannot we enlist them and get them to drill and work under proper discipline?"

Morgan shook his massive head.

"You will never get them to do that. They live a free life, ever ready to beat back an Indian raid, and so accustomed to jump to the front at a word's notice when

danger threatens; but when that is past they want to go home again. You must remember, sir, that they are frontiersmen. They live largely on game. When the father is gone to the wars, the eldest boy must take to the woods for the family meat. Meanwhile the father is wondering how they are getting on at home; so presently he feels that he must go and see; and once there, it is a chance if he comes back again very soon. We must take them as they are, and when we get them, put them where they simply can't run away; for no untrained men can stand a bayonet charge out in the open. Then they will fight, and fight well, — for a while, at least."

"Meanwhile, you want to have me put away the best trained young officer in the camp," laughed the general. "Well, we 'll see, we 'll see." And he turned to a sheaf of commissary reports and soon was deep in intensely interesting columns of figures relating to so many sacks of beans, so many head of live cattle, like the balance-sheet of a farmer in a wholesale way.

Nevertheless, even generals are mortal, and he was not sorry in due time to take a walk for quiet meditation in the cool of the evening. The smoke of the fires rose perpendicularly above the trees, and the camp was alive with the hum of voices, so the whim seized him to wander apart toward a somewhat secluded grove. Even there, however, he overheard the sound of laughter, with now and then a cry of "Well hit!" and a clapping of hands, over and above which through it all came a curiously intermittent clatter.

With his curiosity aroused he strolled inward, and near the centre of the grove in a grassy glade he found an excited group of the younger officers, each with a stout cane in his hand, and coatless. Out in the centre of the glade stood Stuart, defending himself deftly against the unskilful attacks of two comrades, who kept between certain marked lines, and had all they could do, evidently, to hold their own in the contest. Even as he looked, the cane of one swerved for a second from control, and in that second came the thud of Stuart's thrust,

and a fresh man leaped forward into the tracks of the fencer as he staggered back, and instantly engaged the captain's tireless foil.

The general tarried a moment or two, enjoying the sport, and admiring the skill of the lad, then withdrew unobserved, lest he mar their pleasure by seeming to be watching them. Yet, so apt are we to be influenced by others in our judgments that he mused: —

"Morgan is right about one thing, — the lad is educated above his station. I must keep an eye on him."

Meanwhile, the object of his thoughts was busily engaged in educating others. "You must hold your cane more lightly, Tom! It is n't a broadaxe, remember! And let your forefinger reach along it so that you will seem to point with it. It is perilous for the finger, perhaps, but a deadly offence is the best defence. Keep your arm bent, and your point low; then if your opponent thrusts he is bound to come well within your reach. The point is no place to parry! An Ajax could not

depend upon the pressure. So!" — and the instructor himself had to skip nimbly out of distance with a laugh as his pupil obeyed directions with unexpected promptness and fairly caught him unawares.

"Now what I want to know, Captain, is, why that thrust didn't take you right under the collar-bone before you had time to hop away?" demanded the aggravated lieutenant.

"Well, it wasn't your fault that it didn't. I could not parry it as I then was, and knew it before the thrust came. I felt that it ought to come, although I had no business to expose myself as I did. Therefore, even as you planned the lunge I was already leaping out of reach. It becomes second nature, I suppose, just as one swallow in the air will dodge another crossing tracks without stopping to think about it. Your feet learn to wink at coming danger just as your eyes do. I can give no other reason."

"Were you ever 'out,' Captain?" asked one of the older officers, significantly, as by mutual consent they desisted from their sport.

"No, nor do I ever wish to be," was the frank reply. "I'm not fond of killing men."

"Duels are not always fatal," remarked another, with a lazy, Southern drawl. "As to the killing, what of it? The other fellow must die some time, and why not then? However, you are young, and I suppose the idea comes with a sort of shock to you. We in the South, here, sometimes are right quick on the trigger, and so come to think less of it, perhaps. And a man must defend his honour, you know. You'll get over it, I have no doubt, after you have laid out a redcoat or two."

"I hardly think so," said Stuart, with a sober smile. "Perhaps it is because I can use my weapons rather more than a little fairly; but if I were to call a man out, rightly or wrongly, I should feel confident that he would have no chance before me, and what sort of honour would demand that kind of a defence? No! another man might do it, perhaps; but for me to do it would be, I think,

cowardly. It would be betting on a certainty."

"But the other man might choose the pistol," suggested the major.

"Then he would just have no chance at all!" laughed Tom Ludlow. "Don't any of you make any mistake about this. First and last, up North, I guess the captain has deprived King George of about a company of his soldiers."

"Don't, Tom!" said Stuart, hastily. "I hate to think of them. There was not one of them that I would have attacked in my own behalf, or whose death did not benefit our country in some way."

"I don't see as that makes any difference to them now, does it?" —and the lieutenant got into his coat again. "In any case, they ride and raid no more."

There was a decided sensation among the group now reclining at ease under the trees. One or two of them sat up and looked curiously from Stuart to Tom, in manifest varying shades of disbelief. Stuart looked decidedly vexed.

"Is that a fact, Mr. Ludlow?" asked the

major, seriously. "It is rather a grave matter for a joke."

"I am not joking, sir," replied the lieutenant, smiling in spite of his comrade's frowns.

CHAPTER V.

A MAP IN THE SAND.

"SO you two were together up North, were you?" queried Major Burnet of the lieutenant, meditatively chewing a straw. "I thought you came from Sumter, Captain?" he added, turning to Stuart.

"I did, sir. Tom, here, and I were comrades, as he says, but what I may have done in the shooting line in the past was wholly in the line of duty."

"How long have you been with Sumter, Captain?" asked one of the other officers, as he picked out a comfortable spot and sat down with his back to a tree, the others unanimously following so laudable an example.

"I joined him just before the battle at the ford of the Tyger."

"Tell us about it. Was it much of a battle?"

"Hardly. I don't think one could call it that. We would have called it so, say three years ago, perhaps; but really it was just a good smart skirmish. It was n't more simply because there were not more of us, on either side. On ours, we did what we could, and Tarleton, — well, he made a mistake. That is all there was to it."

"You forget, Captain, that we really have heard very little about it, beyond the fact that there was a fight and Sumter got hurt," suggested the major, gently.

"Well, sir, Sumter got word that Tarleton was coming in greater force than he, and prepared to withdraw to a safer quarter, but was overtaken by the British van. He took post on a hillside in a grove, and nearly annihilated that vanguard at the first fire. His men can shoot, you know. Then we crossed the ford peacefully that night and scattered. As you see, it is all very simple to tell of, though a little exciting to go through."

"Having been with Sumter, perhaps you can give us some idea how things have been going further South, Schuyler."

"I suspect that I know little that you do not know already, sir. Rawdon was at Camden at last accounts, and I think Marion was watching him. Cornwallis was somewhere between there and Georgetown, which is on the coast. I think the disaster to Ferguson at King's Mountain shook up my lord considerably, and rather balanced matters for Buford's some time before."

"What was that affair — does anybody know? I've heard all sorts of stories since I came South," remarked another captain, as he endeavoured to extract a spark from a flint and steel for the ignition of some rather damp tinder, and, later, a cigar. Men smoked fewer cigars in those days; partly because they had less, partly because it took longer to light them.

"It was a small affair as to numbers, I believe, but a bloody and brutal business," replied Stuart, gravely. "We ought to make allowance, however, for the fact that Tarleton had been chasing Buford night and day for some three days, at speed, cutting down a long distance between them and driving Buford clear out of South Car-

olina. Then when he did catch up with him, he and his men were keyed up with the strain of that long chase and its fatigue, saw their quarry before them, and what followed was rather natural — for Tarleton.

"You know he is a hot-tempered, hard-headed soldier, with no sentiment about him. The bigger his butcher's bill the fewer men he will have to fight against next time; so he delayed Buford with a parley till more of his own men had come up, and then just rode right over Buford's men, killing one hundred and thirteen and taking the rest. The whole affair was very like him — his men strung along the rear for miles, and a charge with the vanguard. That 's exactly what he did at the Tyger, you know. Only, in one place he met Buford at Waxhaws and at the Tyger he met — Sumter. But he 'll probably regard that as an accident, and if we meet him a third time very likely he will do just the same again. If he does, I devoutly hope that the other man will be either Sumter or Marion," — and Stuart's eyes lit with a strange sparkle.

"What sort of a man is Marion?" asked Major Burnet, inquisitively.

"I've never met him, sir," replied Stuart. "One of Tarleton's sergeants, however, whom we caught, by the way, at the Tyger, told me that he and his men had more ways of making themselves invisible than a swarm of mosquitoes. One time, just before Major Wemyss tried to raid Sumter by night, Tarleton's men chased Marion for over seven hours, and then did not catch up with him. In a day or two he was warming up the British convoys as cheerfully as ever. I have an idea, however, that his men are great ruffians. They can ride, they can shoot, they can disappear when a large force is out against them, and reappear when there is a convoy and plunder to be had. But man for man in equal force, in open ground, I doubt if they would be a match for Tarleton."

"Was that Tarleton's sergeant's opinion or your own?" asked the major a little sarcastically.

"Mine, sir."

"Ah! Well, perhaps you will favor us

with grounds for your rather remarkable statement."

"Easily, sir. The difference between men in their own country, kept together only by the cohesive power of plunder and free riding, and men in a strange country, drilled to iron discipline with their lives dependent on it."

"It seems a little odd, Captain, that you should know more about Tarleton than you do about Marion and yet have been fighting here in the South. I had thought the major's men were rather loose fish."

"He is a colonel now — I should say a leftenant-colonel, I believe. As to the discipline, one time up North when the leftenant and I were on a scout and were in disguise, we heard him tell a lot of his men that if they did not go on quietly they would get nine dozen, every one; and although they were half drunk and wholly quarrelsome, it sobered them like a bucket of cold water. Men don't get sober at a threat unless they have reason to believe in it."

"Apology accepted, Captain, for know-

ing more about Tarleton than I do," laughed the major. "If you have been thus near him you certainly have had advantages over the rest of us. But — to come back to the South — do you know the country round here well?"

"No, sir, not round Charlotte. East of it, to the Pedee, and thence south, or west of it to the Wateree, and south along that, I know it fairly well; partly direct, partly by hearsay. They both strike the seaboard at about the same place — Georgetown. I have never been there."

"Hum!" and the major meditated, while Stuart, like an old campaigner, concluded that even in North Carolina a winter evening might be improved as a comfort-producer, and proceeded to improve upon it by scraping up a few dry leaves and grasses, withered twigs and the like, apparently from nowhere, and concocting therefrom quite a respectable blaze, around which the others automatically drew closer, at first to light their pipes and then for its genial warmth. The lieutenant dropped into conversation with one of the junior officers in

regard to some of their recent experiences and that talk became general.

"Has anybody got a map of the country?" asked the major, awaking from a brown study. Nobody responded.

"How far do you want it to go, sir?" asked Stuart, interestedly.

"Oh, covering the ground south of us, say."

"Well, it runs something like this" — picking up a stick. "Call this stone Charlotte. Here are three rivers all for a space running parallel, and a little east of south: the Pedee, east of us, straight to the coast; the Catawba, west of us, straight to the South Carolina line, where it joins or becomes the Wateree, and thence to the coast; then the Congaree, west of all, — but that runs into the Wateree about half-way between Camden and Monk's Corner. Then off here by your leg, say southeast of the Congaree, is Ninety-Six, just where it can dominate a nest of roads to North Carolina, the mountain region thereabouts, and Camden off this way.

"Then here are the fords, — at least, some

of them. I'll mark such as I know by crosses," — illustrating — "and these crooked lines are some of the roads. I can't give all on this map; they make in some quarters a regular network. It would take a better head than I have to remember them all."

"How on earth do you remember so much? and how much of it are you sure of?"

"I am sure of about all of it," was the confident answer,—"the essentials, that is."

"Well, how did you learn it?"

"Oh, in several ways. I saw a map of it once. It formerly belonged to Tarleton, I think. Colonel Sumter has it now. It had Ninety-Six off here where Camden is, instead of where it belongs, but it did to start with. As for the rest, I am studying geography almost every day. Shall I show you how?"

The major nodded, too much interested to speak, while the others had allowed their pipes to go out. This matter of fords and rivers some time might be a matter of life and death, as they well knew.

Stuart put two fingers in his mouth in a fashion well known to boys, and whistled shrilly, twice. Instantly there was a stir in the men's quarters, and one of them came running toward the officers' fire.

"Brown, is that messenger from Sumter's camp here yet — Gavin Paynt, the man who came to bring my second mount?"

"Yes, sir."

"Send him over here at once." And presently the swampman appeared, wiping his mouth respectfully from nicotine juice as he approached the honourable presence of his superiors.

"Gavin, here is a map scratched in the earth as far as I can recollect it south of us. Here, you see, are the Pedee, Wateree, and the Congaree rivers. These marks are fords; these lines are roads, — the main ones, of course. Now just run your eye over it and point out where it is wrong."

"This here, you say, is ther Congaree?"

"Yes."

"Well, yer wrong thar. Up thar we call hit ther Broad. I b'lieve hit 's ther same river tho'. An' this here ain't no ford;

hit's a ferry. I reckon the rest on't 's right, leastwise, down so far. I never went below Cheraw, here, myself, 'cept once, when I both went and got back too quick ter take notice" — and the man grinned a little as he thought of the raid which he had shared in a few months ago.

"Thank you. That'll do, Gavin; you may go."

The man lingered a little, however.

"'Scuse me, gentlemen, but mought I study hit a leetle 'fore I go? I'd like ter know hit myself more'n I do."

"Oh, yes, look away, while the gentlemen relight their pipes," said Stuart, pleasantly, at which the others laughed and took the hint to replenish the fire and their own private fires.

"Got your lesson, Gavin?" asked Stuart, finally.

"Thank ye, Cap'n, 'er reckon I kin go clar ter Charleston from what I've larnt. Good-by, sir," — and with what was clearly meant to be an unusually respectful military salute the man backed away to go.

Stuart punctiliously returned the salute

without a smile, although the others found it hard to conceal their mirth at the gratified air with which the native departed, evidently highly satisfied with himself.

"Now, gentlemen, to return to our business. Gavin Paynt says this is called by him and his friends the Broad River, up here. It will be well for us all to remember that. He says this is a ferry, not a ford. Next time I draw that map I shall remember to so mark it. Meanwhile, probably he now could draw it for himself, or for Sumter."

"I give it up, Captain," laughed the major. "You are too many for us. Our training has n't been exactly in this direction, highly valuable though it is. I wish it had been. But now that we have our map, what do you say, gentlemen, to planning out a campaign on it? Have we time?"

"If you don't mind, Major," suddenly spoke up a new voice from the rear, "I would like to have Captain Schuyler's ideas on that subject first, to save time, as he is so familiar with the ground."

It was General Morgan who had approached in his usual velvety tread habitual to a hunter, and was scanning closely, with keen, military sight, that sketch-map of the country between Charlotte and Charleston. And the fords indicated were thicker near Charleston than they were near Charlotte — from which he drew some conclusions.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE CAPTAIN PLANNED A GREAT CAMPAIGN.

TO be asked to plan a campaign as one would put a problem on a blackboard at school and prove its correctness — how would you like it? If you were surrounded by a smiling lot of men, the youngest of whom was years your senior, how would you like that? If they had been in constant contact for many months with men, their seniors, whose business it was to plan out and solve just such problems, while you had been in a junior class, yourself, how would the idea strike you?

Or, to take another point of view; you live of course in some city or town. Off somewhere in the next State is an army, and you have a smaller army. You know in a general way, of course, the lay of the ground between, the mountains, the rivers,

and — if you ride a bicycle — the roads. How would you solve that problem for yourself?

Stuart coloured up like a girl beneath his tan. Some heroes, in books at least, are never troubled by any such little questions, but stand ready at sight to give the advice of a sage to generals and kings who have spent their lives in just such work as solving army riddles, and are still alive to ask the hero's advice. But Stuart was not that kind of a genius. Their work never had any mistakes in it. His had a few, although never the same error twice.

Around the night-fires he and his friends often had taken existing affairs and planned things out in advance, as soldiers will; and it had been intensely interesting to him in subsequent days to think over those schemes, and watch how closely results followed as predicted by such amateur councils of war. Sometimes they went far astray, occasionally because of unknown factors, but now and then from sheer unskilful plotting; and it was good practice to go over such work again, in mind, and

remember the errors as errors. But never until now had he been asked to suggest publicly the plan of such a campaign.

Complimentary although it might seem to the others, he had a feeling that General Morgan was not wholly in earnest in his question. Or, to put it a little more correctly, his earnestness was not so much directed toward getting a working answer to the problem as to solve for himself some other problem of his own, which had more to do with Stuart himself than with Messrs. Cornwallis, Tarleton & Co., a firm then in active business, nevertheless, and largely in the travelling line.

"Really, General," he replied to Morgan's question, "I would very much prefer to let my task end with drawing the map, and thus preparing the way for more experienced minds than mine. I have had no practice in major tactics beyond the ordinary chat of troops around the fire."

"That may be, Captain; nevertheless, it is clear that you know the country by heart, as the others do not, and we get their opinions every day, and yours never.

There is a time for everything in this world, and now seems to be the time for us to hear from you. Gentlemen, prepare to listen, accordingly."

The worried, haggard men around the fire shook off their air of constant anxiety for a moment and laughed in a subdued ripple of amusement, one and all deeming it to be another of the general's practical jokes, in the playing of which he was famous; and while his victims had squirmed their squirms in the past, they were none the less ready to enjoy the squirming of comrades in the same good cause of lightening the burden of life in the army when their time had come for the sacrifice. So they poked fresh coals into the bowls of their pipes and sought restful attitudes, their focussed eyes gimleting in to Stuart's very soul. The major even picked up his cane and punched "attention" into the ribs of an inconsiderate junior who seemed inclined to levity over some outside subject instead of helping to vivisect Stuart.

The young captain of cavalry sat for a moment, silently poking small holes in the

turf and burying little stones in them with great care. Then he looked up quietly and met the general's gaze with a smile.

"Very well, sir; your wish of course is an order, and I will do my best, as a matter of simple duty.

"To begin with, however, will some one please tell me about Lord Rawdon — what manner of man is he?"

Stuart paused and looked mildly around the circle, and the circle of his tormentors looked blankly back at him. Obviously Lord Rawdon was likely to be an important element in any campaign of the immediate future, and no plan thereof would be complete without him. Then the circle of inquisitors looked at each other with the same blank result. There was no comfort there. Finally, with one accord, they all swivelled their eyes round to command the general, who merely gave a low laugh and shook his head. Whereupon the major, who played chess in times of peace upon his plantation, remarked judicially, —

"General, check to your king in the first move."

"Well, gentlemen, we will proceed," resumed Stuart, smiling to himself. "The elements in the game are, Generals Greene and Morgan, whom we need not discuss; Colonels Sumter and Marion, with small troops of hard-riding, hard-shooting, evanescent men, with the colours to-day, at their homes to-morrow; and our forces here, which are now quite well drilled, particularly the Maryland men."

A laugh ran round the circle at that, for Stuart's own company, to which he had been temporarily assigned, came from Maryland. However, the statement was merely one of fact.

"Now we have on the other side, Lord Cornwallis, Leftenant-Colonels Webster and Tarleton, and Lord Rawdon. Rawdon we will have to lay one side as an unknown factor, and being such, we will give him all the attributes of Ulysses and Ajax, and Mars thrown in. Then we will at least be on the safe side.

"Now, Mr. Webster is simply a well-read, pleasant, educated gentleman of military occupation. He can be depended on to

obey orders, to go where he is sent, to fight well when he gets there, and probably to stop when he gets there."

"One moment, Captain;" interposed General Morgan. "I do not like to hear honourable leaders on the other side spoken of with disrespect, any more than I would wish to hear our commander-in-chief addressed or spoken of as 'Mr. Washington.' Give them their titles, if you please."

"Certainly, General; but permit me to explain myself. At some times in the past I have been thrown more or less into the company of men born beyond the water, and probably have caught unconsciously some trick of tongue following their customs; one of those customs is that they are rather apt to sink the military and elevate the civilian. Thus General Cornwallis becomes Lord Cornwallis; General Rawdon is called Lord Rawdon, and Leftenant-Colonel Webster, who in civil life would be simply a gentleman, becomes in ordinary conversation 'Mr. Webster,' no disrespect whatever being intended."

"Indeed! that is new to me. However,

as we have broken loose from theirs I think we will keep to our own customs in this as in some other matters. I like them better. Now let us go on with the campaign. Proceed!"

If Stuart felt any temper at the correction he gave no sign of it, but resumed his summary of facts.

"Colonel Webster, then, we will lay one side, as understood. Colonel Tarleton we know to be a man at once hot-tempered and indiscreet, — too impatient to wait for reinforcements, but always ready to fight. He is like a bull in a field. Shake a red rag at him and he will charge without stopping to think that the ditch between you and him may be full of wasps' nests."

"Good!" remarked the major, *sotto voce*, and a smile went round the ring.

"That brings us to Lord Cornwallis. Now, I have always heard that he is a good general. We know that he has beaten General Gates; and it is fair to him to say that he is not the man to overlook the difference in the change of commanders with us. If I am not mistaken he has fought

against both General Greene and General Morgan in the North, and so is likely to hold them in due respect and make his own plans conform, accordingly, to his estimate of them; just as we base our plans on what we know of him, so it is likely that he will fight a cautious, well-guarded campaign, taking few risks, but striving to get to close quarters where his regulars will give him vantage over our militia.

"Now for the map. The earl, at last accounts, was down here at Wynnsborough, about half-way between Camden, where I think Lord Rawdon is, and Ninety-Six, where Colonel Tarleton is said to be; the earl thus is within supporting distance of either, but if he is in any force, then neither of the others can be in great force.

"Next, for the campaign. While our men are not as well drilled as the British, they can move across country faster, on the whole; and it is easier for them to live on the country; so I would break camp here, and send one half of our army down the Pedee as far as Cheraw, where it would threaten Camden seriously. The other half

should cross the Catawba and the Wateree off to the southeast, past King's Mountain about as far, say, as that stone, where it would threaten Ninety-Six. Plenty of scouts should keep feeling the enemy at both places, and at Wynnsborough, and give us warning of any move.

"Now, either wing ought by itself to be strong enough to dispose of either Camden or Ninety-Six, and the earl is sure to know it; so it will put him in a quandary. If he moves to aid one, we must instantly crush the other. What he is more likely to do, knowing our leaders as he does, is to divide his own forces into two armies; and then we must simply trust to our own better knowledge of the land and swamps, and the skill of our leaders; for while, for argument's sake, we might allow the earl to be the equal of General Greene, we cannot grant that either Colonels Tarleton or Webster are the equals of General Morgan.

"Nevertheless, right there is the weak point of the whole plan; for we know nothing at all about Lord Rawdon, who is sure to be in the affair somewhere. That

we must risk, although the law of chances would be with us, I think, for we have both Sumter and Marion to count on, and Lord Rawdon is sure to have a very wholesome respect for both, which will serve to quiet him to some extent.

"Well, with the British in two armies well apart, instead of three in supporting distance, Sumter and Marion should strike for their rear, and their convoys. If the earl condenses his armies into one and darts at one of our wings it must retreat, keeping up a running fight, while the other wing strikes for his rear and his commissariat. The rest would be in the hands of God."

There was silence throughout the group. Pipes had fallen unnoticed, or were held unlighted between the owner's teeth. Eagerly the silent men followed the line of the campaign step by step upon the map, grasping instantly its possibilities, while each man relapsed into the habit most customary. The major nursed his knee. One of the captains with curly hair was thrusting a straw through it, slowly nodding

his head against its point like a Chinese mandarin. Another had clasped his fingers in front of his stomach, and was revolving his thumbs around each other with a rapidity approaching the whir of a humming bird's wings. The general stood silent, abstracted.

It was the major who broke the silence.

"Dividing the army in the face of the enemy violates one of the rules of war."

He spoke not criticisingly, but thoughtfully, as one stating a proposition which should be considered.

"It is one of the rules of war never to leave a hostile fortress in your rear, Major, but the regarding of that stone house as a fortified place of strength cost us the battle of Germantown; for we tried to take it then and there instead of leaving a company to watch it. Rules are good things in their places, but men and circumstances must sometimes modify them."

"Can you tell us what the 'Cowpens' are, Captain? They are down there somewhere, too?"

"I do not know exactly, sir; but I under-

stand that a man named Hannah owns a large number of cattle which he pastures there, and has built a number of yards or pens to drive them into for branding, or perhaps for selection by drovers when they want to buy. It is a grazing country around there, across the Broad River."

"What do you think of it, General?" asked the major, seeing that Morgan still stood gazing fixedly at the map.

The general from the backwoods roused himself and looked first at his questioner and then at Stuart. Then he nodded three times, slowly.

"I think it might do. But if I go off on an independent campaign like that, I shall take Captain Schuyler with me. I think he will be useful in my business."

CHAPTER VII.

LIEUT.-COL. BANASTRE TARLETON ENTERTAINS.

A RIDER halted his horse before the broad portico of a typical Southern house of the better class, — the best one in the little village of Ninety-Six — and cheerily saluted the sole occupant of that comfortable resting-place.

"Really, Colonel, it does one good, a lazy one like your humble servant, to see you in a quiescent state for once. It is a safe sign that there is n't a pestilent rebel within striking distance, and about the only sure one I know."

The addressed lifted his head from a brown study, and his feet from an undignified elevation on the rail, at the interruption, his face breaking into a smile.

"You are complimentary, my lord. As to the rebels, within a striking radius, as

you say, I believe they are quiet. I hung the last one within the hour. If you are curious you will find him in yonder grove — what is left of him. I see the kites are already gathering."

The colonel's visitor gave a low exclamation of disgust as he lightly dropped to earth from his saddle, and stood erect, a well-set up young fellow clad in the scarlet uniform of the British 63d.

"No, thanks! That sort of thing is deucedly disagreeable. I can't see why you do it. Where is the good?"

"*Vae victis*, my lord. Simply war. One more hornet made stingless. Do it often enough and the war is ended. Tarleton's Horse, I intend, shall be remembered by all who cross its path. It cultivates respect."

"*Solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant*," quoted Lord Egerton, sententiously, whereat the colonel laughed a short laugh of appreciation.

"It is true, my lord. I am making a solitude, and I do call it peace, and with good reason; for absolutely it is the only

sort of peace to be had in this country worth having. As to any other kind, — your army sweeps across the country as the wind above the grasses, and the grasses bow before it, and arise when it has passed. But my troop across that country is like a fire on the savannah, and all that stands upright in its rear is charred and no longer to be feared."

"Well, I will not say you are altogether wrong, Colonel, in your point of view; but is it not likely to make a two-edged sword out of war? The dice will fall deuces sometimes instead of sixes, you know, and since the swampmen have taken up as their war-cry 'Tarleton's quarters,' — and I must confess it gave me an uncomfortable feeling when I heard the yell myself, — the original men of your command largely have had to be replaced by live ones. Major Ferguson was much inclined that way, too, I believe, when alive; and when the rebels killed him at King's Mountain and captured his force, I am told that they hung about half his command on the spot."

The colonel laughed a little uneasily, and

instinctively gave a quick glance down the road to where the green uniform of a vidette was visible in the distance.

"It was not quite so bad as that, my lord. For half the force, substitute ten or a dozen; and for British regulars say thieving loyalists — fellows born to be hung, anyhow. They would not have dared to hang Ferguson himself, you may be sure."

"That depends on circumstances. Mr. Washington made no trouble in hanging Clinton's adjutant-general when he caught him."

"Oh, well, that was different. If Jack André had been on the other side, Clinton would have hung him too, without benefit of clergy, and he knew it; so he simply could not decently offer any real argument in protest. But — I take it you did not ride clear from Wynnsborough, my lord, just to discourse sweetly upon executions. Wait; my men captured some pretty fair rum the other day. Also a cart-load of wine from some rich planter. Pluto!" — raising his voice — "bring refreshments!"

A negro of darkest hue promptly ap-

peared with a bottle and glasses. Tarleton proceeded to do the honours, but paused and sniffed suspiciously.

"Pluto, you rascal! this is n't the wine that I have been drinking! Take it away and bring the right bottle."

The man gave a quick, scared look at the colonel as he replied: —

"Fo' de lor', massa, dar ain't no other bottle! dis yere am der last ob der ol' stock."

"Well, where 's the new — bring some of that."

"Fo' de lor', massa, dar ain't none! It nebber got to camp, none but dat ar sample bottle dat the sergeant gib you."

"What the — do you mean to say that my men drank it?" thundered the irate and short-tempered officer, now thoroughly aroused. "If they did I 'll hang some of them as sure as my name is Banastre Tarleton."

"Fo' de lor', massa, dey did n't hab none ob it; an' six ob 'em nebber got to camp anyhow. Dey fell in wid Marion's men," and the negro stopped as though that explanation was all-sufficient.

Lord Egerton lay back in his chair in a fit of laughter.

Tarleton, on the contrary, leaped to his feet and paced the planks with short, quick steps, his brow as black as thunder.

"Colonel, I begin to believe that I ran more risks with my small escort than I had expected," chuckled the visitor. "Neither the solitude nor the peace appear to be wholly satisfactory. Alas for the convoy! 'Pon my word, I believe the news has made me thirstier than ever!" — and reaching for the bottle he helped himself, coughing violently afterward, however, as a few drops of the fiery liquid went down the wrong way, and making a wry face over the raw flavour.

"I don't see why my men did n't report this to me!" muttered the colonel to himself. "I 'll break that sergeant, as sure as he is born, for this."

"Fo' de lor', massa," ventured Pluto, his eyes rolling in concealed enjoyment, "de sergeant dat brought in de bottle was sent off to Wynnsborough right away, wid t'other bottle; an' the sergeant wid the cyart was one ob dose what stayed wiv it."

"So he was! so he was. I had forgotten. Here is a pretty fix, my lord! That bottle tasted so well that I sent its mate on to Lord Cornwallis with my compliments and the promise of more of the same when the convoy was in camp. And now the convoy is, '*non est.*' What is to be done?"

"*Ilium fuit!*" quoted his guest, laughingly. "Unhappy man! know you not that my Lord Cornwallis placed that bottle before a group of us, himself included, and that one part of its consequences was the immediate despatch of myself hither with orders to requisition a goodly share of the same for the use of the headquarters' mess? Now must I go back empty-handed and regretful? O Marion! Marion! the mess will give you curses loud and deep when I return. And as for my Lord Cornwallis! — It is well that you are so deep in his good graces, Colonel, or he would hardly forgive this."

"This hide-and-go-seek sort of war is perfectly infernal," said the colonel, moodily. "We have traversed the country from here to Georgetown and found nothing but our

own people, and the moment that our back is turned down comes Mr. Marion from seventy miles away, for aught I know, and plays the mischief with our communications. Yet nobody can say that Tarleton's men are idle, or slack in well doing. They have burned more houses and hung more men than any other troop in his Majesty's army."

"That surely ought to entitle them to salvation," laughed the other, spreading out a hand that once had been fair and fat, and now was bronzed and thin, and regarding it reflectively.

"Gad! has it come to this? the rings of fair Chloe of Clovelly would fit these fingers now. How the men of the club would stare to see them. And oh! for the roast beef and good old ale of England. For this is the result of army rations in a land cursed by Marions — may their shadows grow steadily less!" he concluded fervently.

"It occurs to me however, that it was not wholly about a few bottles of wine that you took that long ride, my lord," said

Tarleton, rousing up. "The 63d are not thus addicted to equitation."

"Some of us are. I love a good horse with any man; but I love him best as a good hunter in a fair and open rolling country, with the hounds in full cry, and reynard not more than two fields ahead. If you find me then in the second flight and not the first, you will know that it will be because I will have been in the hands of the Jews and cannot afford a better mount. By the way, you are not riding Tartar, now?"

The colonel gave vent to a muffled explosion of wrath, which his visitor contemplated with amused malice.

"Curse it, no! you know I am not."

"Do you know, I never heard the rights of that, how you came to lose him, save that he was run off by your ex-horse-boy, who seemingly has a nice taste for horseflesh."

"He will have a nice taste for hemp, if ever I catch him!" retorted the other.

"But how was it?" persisted Lord Egerton, tilting back in his chair.

"Why,—he got away, that is all. I met him face to face and sent my men at him; but the fellow turned out to be a dead shot and dropped the men right and left with my own duelling pistols. I could not have done it neater myself, I will say that for him; mounted on Tartar as he was, I could do nothing further to stop him, for he could go two feet to my one."

"But men say that you came home on his horse Muskrat, which was notoriously the worst mount in the 63d."

"Oh, as to that, the horse is not so bad," rejoined the other with studied indifference. "He might seem so to you duffers, but not to a real horseman."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the lieutenant. "But really, Colonel, that won't do, you know. I can ride a bit, myself. And I know a vile horse when I see one. And I can assure you I never in all my life saw one which was the equal of Muskrat in that respect; so it is a great wonder to us what whim or vow set you on him."

Tarleton joined in the laugh, good-humouredly.

"Well, I must admit that his character is not altogether saintly. But just consider, man, what company he has been keeping! — the 63d. The 63d mounted infantry! Good Heavens, is n't that enough to demoralize the morals of any virtuous horse in the country? We must not be too hard on him, in consequence. Meanwhile, although I never expect to reform him, — his past education has sunk in too deep, — I will say that I found him tireless and fleet, and bound to be first in the race. I remembered that when we rescued your leftenant and his men from Mr. White up near Lenew's Ferry, and we all had to ride for it afterward to get safely within the lines before it was too dark, young Jack Stuart on that horse was the only one of the lot who could keep up with me on Tartar; and, faith, he could no more be shaken off than a shaggy dog can shed a burr. So I concluded that a horse which could go like that was worth riding. But I have to look out for his heels."

"Well, yes. Now I think of it, that same young Stuart was the only one in

the regiment who could ride him. I never quite understood why you concluded that he could not ride. Some one evidently made a mistake about that."

"It was my orderly sergeant's fault — Wyeth. But he's gone, too, now."

"Ah? What became of him?"

"The rebs got him, at the Blackstocks. But — you hinted that you had another message," suggested the colonel, who had his own reasons for not caring to pursue that line of conversation further.

"Yes, I had; but your exceedingly comfortable attitude as I rode up made it quite unnecessary," laughed the other. "The earl has heard from Camden that the enemy are gathering there in considerable force; just how much of a force he does not know, but it is said by loyalists to be under Mr. Greene, whom the earl seems to hold in considerable respect. That means, of course, that it must be quite a little army, such as it is. This Mr. Greene would hardly be in command of a mere squad, I suppose?"

"Hardly. I believe he is one of their

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best leaders," replied the colonel, his eyes lighting with a battle light and his attention alert. "It is probable that he has displaced Mr. Gates, which means more work for us, after all. Well, I am glad of it."

"But that is not all. Their scouts have been cautiously feeling us at Wynnsborough, just keeping us in touch, you know, enough to keep aware of what we might be doing. What force may be back of them is not yet clear, for our own patrols learned nothing. We ought to have more of them with some enterprise; but that affair at the Blackstocks cost us many whom we now could use with profit," the lieutenant went on placidly, disregarding Tarleton's frowning face. The colonel did not like to hear of that affair. It left a bad taste in the mouth, so to speak.

"So the earl thought it well to find out if you also were being stirred up by them, or if the entire force of the enemy is concentrated against Camden. In that case, of course, he can easily throw the main forces to the relief of Camden, and probably wholly outnumber the rebels."

"No, I have seen nothing of them as yet, and you may tell the earl, with my respects, that yesterday our patrols were ten or fifteen miles north of here and saw nothing to report. But of course that does not mean that some marauding band of Marion's men may not be near us, *perdu*. Of Sumter I have heard nothing for many days."

"Well, Colonel, I must start back with the news, I suppose, such as it is, and will try to be your good angel with the earl and the mess in regard to the lost wine; though, faith, you hardly deserve it!"

"Thanks," replied the colonel, a little drily. "You ought to be somewhat grateful for even one bottle. I might have kept that, you know. But will your escort stand that double ride without more rest?"

"The horses won't, but the men will. They are seasoned fellows. I shall have to trouble you for the loan of some remounts for us."

The colonel looked a little blank at that. He hated to part with his horses.

"Lord Cornwallis's orders, Colonel; here they are in writing," the lieutenant added,

smiling. "He is in earnest to get the news by a reliable hand as soon as possible. He scents battle from afar."

"Hum. Ah — well, I suppose you must have them. I can spare you Muskrat, since the errand is so pressing."

"Good Lord, no!" cried Lord Egerton, hastily, in earnest and unaffected horror, so manifest that Tarleton laughed outright.

"Well, perhaps we can better that. I will see. Wait a moment! Yonder patrol is coming in from the outposts with an air that betokens news of some sort. I see a scarlet coat among them also."

"Yes, it is my sergeant, Wilde. I sent him over among the men to pick up information if he could," rejoined his friend, losing his careless, indolent style and looking the soldier all over now that war matters were to the fore.

The men came trotting swiftly up, wearing a harassed, excited air. One man led a riderless horse; another had his arm in a sling; a third wore a hastily applied bandage around his head from beneath which red drops had fallen and splashed

down his shoulder in a sticky track. The subaltern in command dismounted and saluted.

"We ran into a troop of rebels, sir, about three miles out on the northern road. There were only two or three of them to be seen at first, one of them on a black horse, and we chased them for a mile or more, when they separated and rode in different directions across the savanna. We halted to see what was to follow, and in a moment a lot of them rose right up out of the tall grass where they and their horses had been lying down and we had to ride for it, sharp. They chased us clear in to the town. Then they gave it up and rode back at full speed, — too fast to hope to catch them, so we did not rouse the men till we reported to the Colonel."

That officer gave a wrathful exclamation.

"You should have tried it, at least, as warning that the game is dangerous. I see some of you got hit."

"Yes, sir. The fellow on the black rode off to one side, just as though he knew what was to follow, and when we retreated

we had to pass within four hundred yards of him. His very first shot lifted Black Jack Johnson out of his saddle and we had to leave him. Then the same fellow led in the chase, and rode like a fiend, loading his gun as he came; and every time he fired some one felt lead. I 've seen some good shooting in my time, sir, but never anything in the least like that, — firing from the saddle, with the horses on the dead run. He did not drop any one else, as it happened, but for all that he never wasted a shot, and we have five men in consequence that are booked for the hospital. The other rebels did not get near enough to do any damage, so the rest of us got clear. Sergeant Wilde, here, of the 63d, who rode out with us, says he has seen that man before."

The colonel's jaw had set and his eyes were glinting in the sun like sparks of flame. To be bearded like this in his own lair, his outposts driven in, and chased impudently to his very doors, — his, Tarleton's! His deep-toned voice sounded like muttered thunder as he wheeled upon the sober-faced man in scarlet.

"Well, sirrah! if you know the scoundrel, who is he?"

"I won't say I'm sure about the man, Colonel, but as sure as that I am sitting on this nag, the black horse that he rode was Tartar!"

For a moment there was silence on that verandah, so deep that a cricket in the corner became disgusted at the quiet and came out and chirped loudly in a brave attempt to change it. Then with an effort the colonel overcame his wrath, and turning to his guest said: —

"My lord, you will give my respects to Lord Cornwallis, and say to him that we also are being felt by the enemy, and apparently by some of that accursed Sumter's men. You will say to him that while of course I await his orders, meanwhile I shall endeavour to develop the enemy's strength. — Pass the word there for my bugler, and bid him sound 'boots and saddles' without delay. — My lord, horses are at your disposal, and I wish you a pleasant ride. I shall keep Muskrat myself. It is in my mind that I shall have a need of him."

Before Lord Egerton was well on his way to the eastward he saw behind him the troop of Tarleton gathering like a storm-cloud in the narrow, silent streets of that village of history, Ninety-Six.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PART OF THE "ENTERTAINMENT," AND WHAT CORNWALLIS THOUGHT.

LORD EGERTON'S little escort of troopers was very silent. To begin with, they had a long, hard ride ahead, and by no means a short one behind them, and they were tired. Then their leader was preoccupied and silent to a degree unusual, and men at such times take their cue from their commander. Then the news behind them was altogether disquieting, and not at all conducive to pleasure in riding the many miles between Tarleton's men and the command of Lord Cornwallis.

Even the veteran sergeant, Wilde, deemed it advisable, presently, to edge his steed a little nearer the lieutenant's and venture the question, —

"It is hardly likely, sir, that we shall run across any more of those fellows, is it?

They must be on the full retreat by now. 'Cut and come again' is their motto."

"I was not thinking of that, Sergeant," returned the lieutenant, kindly. He was a clean-built young fellow, now that active campaigning had caused him to shed some of the affectations of his class; neat as a dandy still, clean-shaven, and generally well groomed in that mysterious style which distinguishes to this day the British officer the world over; and among themselves the men of the rank and file spoke well of him and followed him readily; no hero, to be elevated above others, but just cheerily, pleasantly doing his duty, be it rough or neat, and in all weathers, like thousands of his race.

"I suppose you made no mistake about that black, Wilde? It was surely the colonel's horse?"

"I could not be mistaken, sir; there is not his like in the country."

"I never was more surprised in my life than when I heard that young Stuart had deserted," said the lieutenant, slowly, a pained look stealing across his fine features.

"He seemed such a frank, honest lad, that I cannot reconcile it with his character. I suppose it was he who was on Tartar?"

"Yes, sir, I was sure of that, too; but I was afraid the colonel would explode if I should mention that," — and he stole a look surreptitiously at his officer's face, with a subdued chuckle which made the lieutenant smile outright and encouraged him to venture further.

"It was all a trap, sir, and well laid, too. I think young Stuart must have had a hand in it. For one thing, he seemed to be in command, for the company rose up out of the grass when he whistled, and not till then. The foremost went back, too, when he whistled. And more than all that, he must have known that if there was anything which would stir up Colonel Tarleton it would be the news that Tartar was just beyond his outposts; and if the colonel had happened to get the news first instead of an outpost, nothing would have stopped him from rushing out; and if he had — he now would be dead or captured. It was the craftiest baited trap that ever I

saw, sir, in all my soldiering. And that 's why I 'm sure Stuart planned it."

"I always had an idea, somehow, that he was born above his station, Sergeant. How did he strike you? And that is why his desertion seems so utterly inexplicable."

"Well, sir, now I think of it, there 's something to be said for him. Old Wyeth, his sergeant under the colonel, more than hinted, once, that the lad was a somebody at home; and it seemed he never regularly enlisted, but was pressed in New York by the colonel, who happened to want a stable-boy just then and picked him up for the duty without asking 'by your leave.' So I don't believe that he ever took the oath at all. The colonel just turned him over to us, you know, sir, and we sorter took that for granted. So when he got ready to quit I really don't see but what he had a right to, so far as any oath was concerned. Of course they are all rebels together, but some are worse than others, and he arn't one of them."

"Why, yes, now you speak of it I remember it was so. The young fellow

never took the oath at all; and he was wonderfully up in his drill for a mere recruit, I used to think. Sergeant, if we ever get to know the rights of it I 'll lay you a guinea — to be paid out of our prize money — that the boy was at some time, at least, a private in some crack regiment of their army."

The sergeant grinned at his officer's pleasantry.

"I don't think either of us would have much capital of that sort to wager, sir, if the bet were made and ever came to settlement. The way it would be solved most likely would be by our being captured by him some time when on one of the earl's errands. Well, there 's one comfort; if that should ever happen, I would feel my neck safer as his prisoner than if it were some one else, — Sumter, or Lee, or Marion, — and I make the wager, sir, if you like."

Here the sergeant rode for a rod or more with his chin on his shoulder, looking back sharply along the bridle-path which they were following — by brevet a road.

The lieutenant looked thoughtfully ahead.

"I am curious to see what the earl makes of our news, Sergeant. Somehow I have a feeling that he will regard it in a different light from the colonel's point of view. I 'm afraid Tarleton had his mind too much absorbed in Tartar just then. What you tell me about young Stuart being in command, and your reasons — good ones, too, — make me fear there is more to it than we first thought. There can be no doubt about it, can there? Deserters are not usually promoted to command in any army, you know."

"Yes, sir, I 'm sure of it. The Leftenant will remember that he ordered me to pick up among the men such camp-gossip of recent affairs as I could, so when that sergeant invited me to take a ride out to look at the country I did n't say no. But we did n't see anything, and halted for a rest not out of sight of the houses; then in came a picket tearing along, and at their heels the rebels appeared, all of them splendidly mounted.

"I says to myself, 'Those men have looted some rich old planter, for they are

riding blooded stock;' then the black caught my eye; then the broad, chunky cut of his rider. The Leftenant may not remember that young Stuart has a pair of arms and shoulders fit to level a giant with a 'straight left;' and at broadsword drill old Wyeth told me it took a more than good man to guard his head when a down cut was coming with Jack at the other end of it. More than one man, he said, sat down hard on the ship's deck because of that. Well, maybe there 's two youngsters in the rebel army built like that; but it is n't likely.

"The sergeant, he sings out to the rest of us, 'Huzza, boys! here 's more meat for the crows,'—and away we all went, helter-skelter. At first we seemed to gain on them, too, hand over fist; but the rider on the black rode last, with his chin on his shoulder, and he never let us get within fair gunshot, but all the time almost there; till finally I told the sergeant — Bradley, his name is — that we might as well chase the Flying Dutchman, and that I, for one, did n't care to ride further; so we pulled up.

"That is n't exactly the way the sergeant told the story, but it is the truth of it. Then, as he said, the men all started off in different ways; but the black cantered off to one side, and it struck me all at once that it was exactly as though they were getting ready for a charge of a battalion; and all at once I saw something glisten in the sun on the shoulders of the black's rider. I looked sharp, and blame me if the fellow was n't wearing on his buckskin hunting-shirt a pair of shining new podges."

"Really!"

"As true as that I 'm riding here, sir."

"This is deucedly interesting. What came next?"

"Well, sir, the next was pretty much as Bradley told it. The officer just gave a whistle, one that purled and trilled right prettily if it had only been anywhere else, — I guess he had one of those turkey-bone whistles that the natives round here sometimes make. The next minute there was a troop of horsemen enough to swallow us, and coming on the full run. Bradley gave one yell, — 'Ride for your lives!' — and sent

the spurs in where they 'd do the most good. The officer, as the sergeant said, had ridden off to one side and backward, so that we had to pass him in the retreat."

"Rather a scarey affair, 'pon my word, Sergeant," — and the lieutenant nodded kindly to his tried subordinate.

"Well, sir, at first I did n't mind it much. I had a good horse, and if any caught up with me I felt I was good for them too. But after that very first shot, then I own I began to feel horribly creepy. If the fellow could shoot like that, you know — "

"I know," responded Lord Egerton, sympathetically. "Gad, I was in just such a fix once myself, and of course I had to ride in last of the troop, and I don't mind telling you that I felt all the while as though a gimlet was just about to prod me in the back."

"That 's it, sir, exactly," grinned the sergeant. "I remembered that time, an' felt sure you would n't misunderstand me and think I was funking."

"Not a bit of it! but go on."

"There is n't much more, sir, different from what Bradley told, except that all at once I recognized who the fellow was, and I roared out 'Jack Stuart!' in my surprise. The fellow must have ears like a wild thing, for he heard me; and he straightened up a little in his saddle, and looked sharp-like, then he up and raised his hand in a sort of flourish to me. Then that confounded gun of his went up again, and the next second, on the dead run though we were, one of Tarleton's chaps got it plumb through the jaw. But after that, somehow, I did n't feel afraid. My scarlet made so good a target that if he 'd meant it he would have taken me first. But for the rest of the race I felt that he was out after Colonel Tarleton's new set of devils, and was n't gunning for his old comrade in the 63d."

As Lord Egerton surmised, the earl did differ from Tarleton in his summing up of the matter.

"So the rebels are in touch with him, too, you say; and he thinks they are Sumter's men. What do you think, my lord?"

he said to the lieutenant, as the latter, stiff and lame from his long ride, made his report.

"Colonel Tarleton's opinion, sir, is based on the fact that a man among the rebels, who was recognized by my sergeant as one who deserted to Sumter, carrying off the colonel's horse with him, still rode the horse, which fact nearly upset the colonel's equanimity," — and the lieutenant smiled quietly to himself. The earl, on the contrary, laughed outright.

"Are we never to hear the last of that? I believe Tarleton remembers that as the bitterest thing he has against the enemy. But did you agree with his estimate?"

"Not wholly, sir. The deserter wore epaulettes and was in command. Colonel Tarleton brought him with him from the North. Such sudden promotion argues that he was among old friends; that is to say, friends from the North. Now, Sumter and his men are all Southerners to a man, I have been told. Ergo, those are not Sumter's men, but, rather, some that were under the command of Mr. Greene; and the

deserter has evidently made his way to Greene's command after his escape from our lines. So I argue that it is Greene and not Sumter who is threatening the colonel."

"Very well reasoned out, my lord," said the earl, kindly. "You have studied war to some purpose. You are at least partly right. They are Greene's men. But loyalist information has come in that indicates that Mr. Greene himself is at Cheraw. This puts us in a quandary," he added, as to himself, as he thoughtfully paced the verandah of his headquarters.

"There are no troops in front of us, after all. Our scouts were misled by raiders. But it now appears that they are in force opposite both Camden and Ninety-Six. Mr. Greene himself is against Camden; and skilful fighter as he is, no doubt he has placed his best man against Tarleton, and that, beyond a doubt, will prove to be Morgan. I remember both of them in the North, and they are not men to be treated lightly.

"This move changes completely our plan

of campaign. Either we must concentrate or we must reinforce Tarleton. Morgan presently will be gathering in little parties of mountaineers until his force will grow like a snowball large enough to overwhelm the colonel; and Greene will make trouble for us if we lessen our strength here by detachments. Stay! we are forgetting Leslie! Never was reinforcement more opportune. His fifteen hundred men, freshly landed at Charleston, should be near us by now. They will enable us to match the enemy by division with more safety, although always dangerous, and doubly dangerous in the face of Greene and Morgan. Lord Egerton — or — no! you are weary. Mr. Bryant, kindly give my compliments to the adjutant-general and direct him to issue instant orders to Leftenant-Colonel Tarleton for an advance; send couriers in haste to Leslie to hurry him forward between ourselves and Tarleton; and warn our own troops to be ready to march North to-morrow at daybreak, in a line parallel with the other two. Perhaps we can checkmate Mr. Greene at his own game."

And so the wary general planned a disposition of his forces which was calculated to leave a mark northwesterly across the country like the trail of a giant, three-toothed harrow, leaving a harried country in its wake. And presently the still Southern air was filled with the low hum of voices, the clash of steel, the creaking of baggage carts, and the heavy rumble of artillery as the soldiers of the earl made haste in their preparations to advance to the aid of his lieutenants, in whose fronts the war-clouds were gathering; for Lord Cornwallis knew, too, as well as any man, that an able offence was often the best defence.

But would Banastre Tarleton, lieutenant-colonel, wait for the slow coming of orders and slower supporting columns of reinforcements when such a lure as a certain black steed with flaunting mane and flowing tail was said to be disappearing and re-appearing like a will-o'-the-wisp beyond his outposts at Ninety-Six?

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE ENTERTAINS.

THERE was a hum and bustle in the army at Charlotte. On the morrow it was to begin once more active service, and faces of men and officers were hopeful of good fortune, for they had been drilled to a discipline not known by them before.

"So, my little planner of campaigns, I hear that your scheme is to be carried out, and Lord have mercy on the hindmost," remarked the major pleasantly to Stuart as they walked together toward headquarters after drill.

Stuart felt oddly embarrassed, and looked from side to side in a funny way, as though seeking an avenue of escape; but with the major on one side, and a ponderous artillery man on the other flank, and a group of light infantry officers closely in the

rear, flight seemed out of the question just then.

"All I can say, Major, is that if so it will depend on the rest of you to carry it to a success. And even then

> Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

"Why, Captain, one would think you lacked faith in your own prophecy. Cheer up, man. You must not judge us by what we did under Gates. We can fight when we are rightly led; and Leftenant Ludlow is responsible for the statement that you can do a little fighting, too, in proper time and season."

"Oh, Tom! Well, sir, you must make allowances there, you know, for the partiality of one old comrade for another. I may have been somewhat the luckier in promotions, but for most of the last three years we fought shoulder to shoulder, sleeping under the same blanket; so when next he starts a story about my adventures, as I hear he has a vile habit of doing, just ask him, on his honour, where he was at that particular minute and what he was doing." And

now it was the lieutenant's turn to grow red about the ears, while the current of badinage turned promptly in his direction.

"'T aint so! It is not so!" he floundered, mixing up the vernacular and the official styles of speech in a way delightful to his tormentors. And then they proceeded to draw him out by a virulent cross examination, under which he sweated for minutes that seemed hours, while Stuart plodded along, grinning unfeelingly. Tom's way of letting daylight in upon the young captain's past was a constant trial to the latter, and he was not sorry to give him a little punishment; and in so doing he successfully shifted the conversation to subjects other than himself, for which he was most thankful.

To tell the truth, for some days he had been not a little dismayed to note from various casual remarks and significant preparations that the plan of campaign to which the major referred, and which he so offhandedly sketched in the sand the other night, was likely to be taken up seriously by his general; in which event some one,

of course, must have told him of his subordinate's presumption. Or, what was more likely, the general's keen, soldierly mind had of its own accord grasped the essential facts of the situation and had planned his future course accordingly. There was some comfort in that thought. So taking such solace from it as he could, he stepped onward more confidently.

"Is it known definitely, Major, where we are to go?"

"Not by me, — beyond the general orders to prepare to march. You are under bond to go with General Morgan, I believe."

"He is not in camp, however."

"No; I think he has gone across the Broad on a preliminary expedition under Smallwood. He will reappear, I have no doubt, when wanted."

Stuart had no doubt on that point, either, although he would have preferred one of a large size; for Morgan's close scrutiny and questioning had made him decidedly uneasy. It seemed to portend an indefinable something overhanging his sky like a cloud

which now and then allowed a star to gleam from beyond it.

The major halted so suddenly that the group behind bumped into him.

"Who are those fellows? What splendid horses!"

It was, indeed, a troop magnificently mounted, which came riding two by two from the south into camp, about a hundred in number. Their trappings were dingy with age and service; but their horses shone as though clad in satin, and stepped gingerly along with the light, deerlike tread of thoroughbreds.

"Some of Smallwood's men, Major," answered an officer better informed than the rest.

"That handsome six-footer in the van is Billy Washington."

A laugh ran around the group at this irreverent reference to the broad-shouldered lieutenant-colonel.

"If General Morgan were here, my friend, he would read you a lecture on the proper usage of military titles; but we will forgive you if you can tell us where he has been."

"Then I must go unforgiven, I fear, Major. I can tell you where he was sent, but as to saying where he has been, — omniscience only can tell that. He was ordered across the Broad, to look after the tories generally, and pick up news in particular. But if any of his news told of a tory gathering in convenient distance it is more than likely that he broke up the convention. It is a way he has."

The tall Virginian rode up to them gaily in the midst of the laughter and was cordially greeted.

"What news, Colonel?"

"None. The country is clear enough for a fox-hunt. I must report to the general, and then I am with you. Where shall I find him?"

"Come along with us, Colonel. You are just in time for a general rendezvous, a final banquet, so to speak, to which the chief has invited us before marching, — would there were more like him!" the major wound up feelingly, for General Greene had indeed been in the habit of inviting his officers to his table, and then

and there smoothing away little differences and jealousies between them, to the great benefit of the service.

The colonel, nothing loath, ran his fingers merrily through his thick hair and joined the procession, an orderly taking charge of his horse.

"Where did you leave General Morgan, Colonel?"

"Just behind; his infantry are escorting Colonel Rudgley and a hundred tories as permanent guests," smiled the other.

"Why, I thought you said there had been no fight!"

"There has not been," — and the raider lay back his head and laughed and laughed, till the others began to laugh too, from sheer sympathy.

"The general gave me leave to make a wider circuit than his riflemen could take," he said at length, recovering his voice, and wiping away a tear.

"The very next day we came on those fellows quite unexpectedly to both parties. They rushed for a house which was too well placed to be run over, and I had no mind to

lose half my boys in a charge against concealed musketry. So we galloped up to just beyond range, deployed into an imposing line, and halted; the tories were clustering around the windows like bees in a swarm.

"I rode out to the fore, took a good look or two, then sent a fellow to the rear in a hurry on some important business. Then in a minute, after another look, I despatched another after him, on still more important business. Then a dozen of my lads at the back slipped off quietly behind the trees. Then for a minute or two I rode along, looking at the house, and then back to the rear in an impatient way; and when they were keyed up well to expect about anything short of the whole continental army, back came that dozen of our boys in a cloud of dust, with yells and cracking of whips in the air, dragging a set of heavy cartwheels with a log and a box mounted on them, taken from the next plantation.

"They came right up behind us at a gallop, horses plunging, drivers yelling, and executing into 'action front' in a twinkling,

they came into battery. We who masked them scattered right and left to draw up the curtain, and down jumped our old battery sergeant and trained that log most fatally where I pointed for him with my drawn sword. Half a dozen more jumped into some sort of battery-drill positions and stood waiting for the word, but I held up my hand for a halt, and with everything ready for battle sent a peremptory demand for a surrender. And will you believe it? Those poor scared fellows surrendered to a man, Colonel Rudgley and all, without a shot. Oh, it was rich — rich! to see that tory jump, after the surrender, when his march took him past that woodpile gun! and the curses of his men flew like autumn leaves in a gale of wind," — the colonel grew poetical in his merriment. "We had nothing but cavalry with us."

"Well, you have the thanks of the army, Colonel, for the best joke we have had since we came South," was the rejoinder, as soon as the laughter of the crowd permitted anything else to be heard. "But men who ride such steeds as yours must from very

shame do more than other men, to live up to their example."

"Where on earth did you get such splendid stock?" asked Major Burnet, enviously.

"Oh, here and there one," replied the raider, carelessly. "We need good horses for our work. Most of them came from Virginia."

"Ah, you are fortunate, — Virginians generally are in that line, I believe," was the laughing response. "There are only two horses in the army worthy of associating with them."

"Indeed! so many? Where are they?" returned the colonel, quickly.

"Stop! stop! we cannot have you annexing those!" and the major laughed outright. "They both belong to the captain, here — excuse me; allow me to present to you Captain Stuart Schuyler, of the cavalry, unattached, now serving with us."

Stuart bowed, but remained silent.

"Schuyler? Schuyler? I think I know the name."

"Probably the Colonel is thinking of

General Schuyler," said Stuart, swiftly. "The name is all we have in common, I believe, except our patriotism."

"Ah! Well, Captain, that is quite enough to commend you to me," — and the officer genially held out his hand.

"Especially if he owns a couple of blooded horses," added the major, *sotto voce;* but the colonel's keen ears heard him.

"Don't take away my character before these young men, Major, or they will not serve under me; and I want a few more of them before I ride again. I am a little short of officers."

There was a simultaneous movement among the younger officers almost to a man. To ride with Lieutenant-Colonel Washington meant adventures indeed, and that gentleman smiled, well pleased.

"We will talk of this later on. I can take but one or two, at most, you know; and meanwhile here we are at headquarters. I must talk it over with the general."

That was a banquet long to be remembered by those who shared its pleasures.

Not from the abundance of the good things of life, although they were not lacking, for by this time the country round about was agreed that in General Greene at last they had a general who was that long looked for being, — a Man, with a big "M," — and supplies were forthcoming accordingly. But from sheer good fellowship of soul, of men who were fighting right royally together in one common cause, for one of the greatest causes on earth, — freedom, and their country. And however they might differ in mind and soul they all had that one common denominator to unite them into a solid, a safe field on which all could meet. So, here a Northern farmer and a Virginian planter held earnest converse with a Carolinian dealer in tar, and even like the members of the two churches that came down to cross the river, beyond it nobody asked by what route they came. Their errand covered all.

The floors of the spacious house which served as headquarters rang with the tread of many a manly foot, and the jingle of spurs and clink of a sword ring were more

frequent than the tinkle of glasses, although they too, after the manner of that time, were not infrequent. The handsome uniforms of the general's staff, in their buff and blue, neatly brushed by willing coloured servants; the boyish, smooth-shaven faces of their wearers gave it the look of far more peaceful times than a farewell dinner the night before a campaign from which some at least surely would not return.

The general received his guests in person, like the courtly gentleman that he was, saying an appropriate kindly word to each; and keeping Colonel Washington by his side, he introduced to him such of the officers as had joined since last they met. Among others, indeed the last, was Stuart.

Still wearing his now well-fitting but backwoodsy uniform of hunting-shirt and riding breeches, he had kept in the background, feeling somewhat ill at ease, yet conspicuous among them all by reason of his dress, so well adapted to the grim work of war; and him the general beckoned to come forward, in due time. A shadow

crossed his face as he did so, and Stuart intuitively knew the reason.

"This is Captain Schuyler, Leftenant-Colonel Washington," said the general, for him a little coolly. "I can commend him to you as an excellent drill-master, should you require one at any time."

The colonel cordially reached out his hand.

"I am told he has another excellence, of special importance in my eyes, General, to wit, a pair of splendid horses. May I ask, Captain, to what regiment you belong? I cannot tell from your uniform."

The young fellow looked up frankly into the face of the towering Virginian above him, and replied: —

"I do not wonder at that, Colonel; for, in the first place, although in the cavalry, my commission was sent me by General Washington from a distance, with simple orders to report to General Greene for duty. While as to the uniform — it is now about two years since I last met that being of myth and story, the paymaster, and therefore I neither have the uniform nor the wherewithal to get one."

"Good Heavens, Captain!" broke in the general, his face aflame with colour, "that was very thoughtless of me, indeed, and I sincerely apologize! I must confess that till now I never gave the matter a thought, your attire being so perfectly serviceable, and your shoulder insignia being sufficient to indicate your rank. It is a pity that it is too late now to get supplies of that character. But as soon as circumstances admit I promise that you shall be supplied with what is due to your rank."

"Never mind, General," laughed the colonel. "There are no ladies here; and I imagine the men will obey the wearer of that uniform as sharply as some others. Give him to me. I meant to ask you for another captain as I am short of one. I fancy that Schuyler will just suit me."

"Well — I half promised him to Morgan; but it will be all the same, as you will be under Morgan; yes, you may have him."

"Thank you, sir; — and, Captain, while there is daylight to see by let's slip out for a few moments with the general's permis-

sion, and have a look at those wonderful horses of yours."

"Have a care, Colonel, or I shall begin to think that it was the horses and not the captain you were so solicitous about," smiled their superior officer. "But off with you, both, for the light is going. That door is the shorter way."

It was not far to the stables of the officers, and they soon found Tartar and his equine companion complacently whisking their tails and indulging in some unaccustomed luxuries in the forage line, served out to them as the last they were likely to get for some time to come.

The colonel uttered an exclamation at the sight.

"Oh, you beauty!"

Tartar stopped work, and reaching round, rubbed his nose a moment against his master's sleeve, and Stuart, as he had done many a time before, affectionately put his arm across the arched neck and led the black out to view.

The colonel gave another, a startled, exclamation, and sprang backward.

"As the Lord lives, I've seen that horse before, and you!"

And Tartar, all unconscious of times and seasons in the lives of men, placidly resumed his forage.

CHAPTER X.

THE TOAST TO GENERAL WASHINGTON, AND A QUESTION OF LOYALTY.

WHEN one is playing a game, it is more or less unpleasant to be found out. When the forfeit happens to be one's liberty, or perhaps his life, it is exceedingly inconvenient to be found out. You may take this to be a fact, and any doubter is at liberty to experiment for himself. He will be fully satisfied of its correctness, and the world will have the satisfaction of saying "I told you so!" Also the doubter, very possibly, will not have occasion to have many more doubts on any subject whatever, — a matter depending somewhat on the nature of his "experiment."

When Colonel Washington made his emphatic statement, for as many as two long seconds Stuart felt exactly as one may be

supposed to feel when the ground slides away from beneath him and he is taking a drop of unknown fathoms deep.

There is on record the tale of a man who fell into a pit, and all night long he clung to the edge of it till his hair turned white with terror; and as the sun rose and shone in his eyes he lost his hold and fell — as he thought, for miles! and wondered to find himself alive when he reached bottom. Stuart's two seconds seemed to him as long as that man's night. But the man's drop into the unknown depth beneath him was just six inches; and his drop might well be slightly more than that, through a platform; for men did some deeds swiftly in those days, and it was a far cry to the North and friendly witnesses. Then his sound common sense reasserted itself, as he reflected that this was all folly; he really had nothing to conceal, save a secret due to his natural reticence about his own affairs; and with that thought he recovered himself and was on instant guard again.

"As to the horse, Colonel, I really cannot say, for he has not been mine long.

He is the spoil of mine own spear, reft from the Egyptians that now dwell around Charleston. I hardly expected you to remember me, either; but I often had the pleasure of seeing you while in the Jerseys, and once halted you while on picket. But I was a private, then."

"What! are you that boy? Why, yes! I remember your face. And you are the lad that won renown throughout the whole army by making General Lee dismount in the mud when he did not have the countersign. Ha! ha! ha! No wonder your face seemed familiar to me. You had strange luck for one in outpost duty. Well, I congratulate you on your promotion. I always thought you deserved that just for halting Lee. But I am truly sorry that you caught that horse! I remember him now, too, and had fully determined that sometime he should be mine own. Would you care to sell him?"

It was a very broad hint; what would n't a Virginian do in those days — and some later ones — for such a mount!

"I am heartily sorry, Colonel, to say no;

but if I am to ride with you I must have the wherewithal to keep up with you; but I think you may count on my being right at your back when I am wanted there."

The colonel was not a particularly brilliant nor even a wary man. To make a slashing charge regardless of all obstacles, to be here to-day and seventy miles off to-morrow, and ready to fight at either place if he found the enemy, — that was Colonel Washington.

But he did not possess the deep nature to plan, to see far in the future, to turn to instant advantage unforeseen occurrences, as had his great kinsman; and where the commander-in-chief, or even Morgan, would have detected that there yet remained a mystery, he quite readily accepted Stuart's statements and never referred to them again, from that point of view. But he heaved a sigh deep and long as he turned away from the stables, saying: —

"I suppose I must be content with that; but it is a great temptation to covet one's neighbour's goods. Some men remember men, but I remember horses, — they are

honester, as a rule. And this one — oh, well, let us change the subject; and it is time we were getting back to the general."

The board had been cleared by the silent-footed servants; and the officers, with the reins of discipline relaxed, were merrily exchanging small-talk and repartee, while a foot below the raftered ceiling circled blue strata of tobacco smoke, kept swirling there by the draft from the windows. It was fairly dense, and as the tall colonel and his new captain entered the room, Stuart coughed and sneezed, taken by surprise as the cloud enveloped his head; while his taller senior stalked unconcernedly along with his head in the pure air above him, but partly eclipsed from the view of his friends as they sat around the table. A burst of laughter greeted him.

"Why, Colonel, you look for all the world like Jupiter Tonans, serene above the gathering thunderstorms on the hills below," cried the major, classically.

"Do I?" returned the colonel, with a puzzled air. "Is Mr. Tonans a Virginian?

I don't recall the name. Squire Randolph owned a Jupiter, I believe. He was a very short boy, and very black. He bought him in South Carolina from a rice planter."

A smothered laugh, barely repressed, fluttered around the table. Colonel Washington evidently was not well read in the classics.

"No, it was another Jupiter I had in mind, who was said to be an excellent judge of wine and a very poor one of women. But he lived before our day. Never mind him; here is something more to the present moment, — some excellent wine. Will you have a glass with me?" — and the major thus kindly covered the exposed flank of his colonel with a strong skirmish-line; successfully, too, as the general movement of those around him toward their refilled glasses testified.

"One moment, gentlemen," exclaimed General Greene, pleasantly, turning from an earnest conversation and becoming aware of a liquid crisis, "one moment; allow me to give you a toast — 'Our country's liberty, and its bravest defender, — General George Washington!'"

The officers sprang as one man to their feet, thrusting glasses hastily into the hands of the new-comers, and with faces already flushed they drank the toast with enthusiasm and hearty cheers, the colonel's resonant voice ringing along the rafters in honour of his mighty kinsman.

Captain Schuyler cheered with the rest, and touched his glass to his lips with the rest, in hearty sympathy with the sentiment; but he lowered the wine, barely tasted, intending quietly to pour the contents of the glass upon the floor. The crush around him was so great, however, that this proved impracticable, and he was forced to restore it, nearly full, to the table from whence it came, trusting that it would remain unnoticed.

In this hope, however, he was disappointed, as a young subaltern beyond him, who already had taken more than was good for him, glanced along the board and cried, "Beware, gentlemen! there lies a full glass. Some one has not drunk the toast."

Instantly there was silence along the table. Not to respond to such a toast as

that was then a grave matter, hinting at disloyalty, and frowns gathered on brows which a moment earlier had been benign, and lips that had smiled became grimly set.

"Captain Schuyler," said General Greene, in a calm seriousness, "I see that the glass in question stands before you. Was it yours?"

The room suddenly became singularly still.

"Yes, General."

"You did not drink the toast with us, then?" and calmly serious still was the general's tone, as steadily he eyed his junior officer.

"Pardon me General, for the correction; but I was with you heartily in spirit, if not in the spirits, and I touched the glass to my lips in honour of our revered chief. Beyond that I could not go, as I do not drink wine."

And in those days it took far more courage for a young man to say that than now. But perhaps young men were braver then than now.

There was a flutter of incredulity. It

was so unheard of! and some of the more impetuous among them barely bethought in time the respect due to their general and their host, so eager were they to break in.

"I think we are entitled, Captain, to know your reasons, in view of all the circumstances."

"Well, sir," — and Stuart coloured deeply, and hesitated, — "I have always understood that liquor of any kind is fatal in the long run to steady nerves. Now, without boasting, I think I may say I am as good a shot as there is in the army, with rifle — or pistol," he added significantly, as a snort of disbelief broke from a half-bred youth in the corner, the same who had started the trouble. "And while the war lasts, at least, I hope to remain so."

"Your reason is good as far as it goes, Captain," the general replied, his brow clearing somewhat, yet not wholly; "yet I venture to state that there is something back of it which we have not yet reached. Am I not right?"

"Yes, General," and the flush deepened under the bronze. Then throwing back his

head in what was perilously near to a defiant attitude Stuart exclaimed: "If you must have it, General, far away in the North there lives a little girl who dreaded greatly the perils and temptations of the camp; and I promised her that if I returned from the war at all to her, I should come as clean as I went."

The colour came into the faces round about him with a rush. What one of them had not left behind him some one who was waiting and praying for a safe return? What one of them did not feel unwonted tears starting to their eyes, so suddenly were their guards taken all unawares? Even the young snickerer in the corner was quelled by the silence that fell upon the company for long seconds, and stared furtively first at his general and then at the sturdy young captain. Then the major from his place down the table broke the silence by quoting in a half-whispered voice, as though his thoughts really were far away and he was speaking to others than those around him, —

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings."

And then from his place spoke the general, the brave, war-worn leader of armies whose defeats were victories in their ultimate results: —

"Captain, I must ask your pardon for thus pressing the matter. I know not which to honour greater, the courage of my officer or the virtue of his lady. To both let this be the symbol."

And deliberately reaching out his hand, a grave, stately smile lighting his florid face, he lifted his glass from the table, and significantly replaced it on the board, inverted.

What kinder, more emphatic indorsement could be given, at such a time and place? Then rising from his place he stood in the middle of the room, as his officers gathered around him, and shook each one in turn affectionately by the hand, bidding him God-speed in the campaign which was to begin upon the morrow; urging them to remember that in the wear of sleepless nights and weary marches men more than at most other times need to bear with one another's failings, to lay aside private jeal-

ousies, and to stand shoulder to shoulder in the battle for their common cause and country; cheering them with his steady confidence in their final victory, sternly though the war might rage meanwhile.

"It cannot last for ever, gentlemen! We have proved ourselves in the North to be the winners of war's laurels; and surely our work here is but just begun. It needs but a few more battles like King's Mountain, and the tories will fall away from the British and will seek their dens and swamps; and without them, helpless indeed will be the British army. The war in the South has been so against us because we have been fighting our own people and not a foreign enemy. Once face to face with a purely British army, and man for man we need not fear results. Now, gentlemen, you have your orders. God bless you all!"

And lighted by blazing flambeaux of pitch-pine in the hands of sable attendants, by twos and threes the officers thoughtfully went their way to their quarters, ready once more to lift the sword again.

But as he passed him on his way, Major Burnet significantly held out his hand to Stuart with a silent but hearty pressure, which the boy most gratefully returned.

It means so much to one to be understood!

And even as they parted, other waving lights in the distance betokened other arrivals, and the hum of voices told that Morgan had arrived, in readiness to march with the army on the morrow. Stuart met him and his escort, face to face, and as he silently drew aside and saluted he could not help a feeling of thankfulness that the watchful, wary eyes of the frontiersman had not been looking on at that banquet so lately ended.

CHAPTER XI.

COLONEL WASHINGTON'S ADVANCE GUARD.

FOR days along the dun red road like a river of steel the army went, with long, swinging, woodsmen's stride, and clad in uniforms of green that matched the forest on either side. Greene had the larger part, by far, but Morgan's were riflemen, each a host; and he had the promise of others to come from their rendezvous in his line of march.

So southward, ever southward, till they crossed the Southern border and the trees of the Lower Carolina towered high above their heads; and hour by hour, in twos and threes well-armed horsemen joined the plodding, hurrying men, each fresh from his mountain home, and perhaps equipped with a swinging haunch of venison and a little sack of corn as the only ration for the days to come. The brown waters of the Pacolet,

turbid with the rains, swirled around their limbs as they splashed across the fords; the drifting storm again and again hissed through the tree-tops, and sent cold drops through their garments to their shivering skins; yet on they swept with faces set and earnest, till the miles lay long behind them and the tree-clad ridge of glorious King's Mountain loomed above them. Then Morgan called a halt. It was time now for more cautious measures.

"Colonel Washington, you will now keep well in advance of the infantry; you will establish a line of couriers between yourself and us, and keep me informed every few hours concerning your progress. You will despatch Captain Schuyler with a strong platoon to lead the van, and draw the enemy, and if possible ascertain his strength. You will find the latter at Ninety-Six."

"I understand, sir." And the colonel saluted.

"And you, Captain Schuyler?" — and the general turned to his junior captain as he sat silently on his horse at his colonel's back.

"I also, General, except on one point. Is it your desire that when found we merely develop his strength, or do you wish us to draw the enemy from his lair, and entice him out in order to give battle?"

"The latter, certainly. That is what we have come for — to fight him."

"I understand, sir," — and the captain awaited any further instructions which the general might see fit to give direct; but after a puzzled look or two the general waved him away somewhat abruptly, and when out of earshot he said sharply to the astonished colonel: —

"Keep an eye on that fellow, Colonel, and if you see anything suspicious, put him under arrest at once. If more than suspicious, and an arrest inconvenient, shoot him."

Then he wheeled his own horse and cantered back to the rear guard, leaving the colonel staring after him in a most uncomfortable frame of mind, his honest head groping vainly for some clue to this strange state of affairs between his new officer and his well-tried leader, of the loyalty of both

of whom he had supposed that he possessed convincing proofs.

"Has the general gone mad?" he muttered. "If he distrusts the captain, why on earth does he send him out in the advance guard? Does he think that perhaps he will get shot and so make further trouble unnecessary? There is some confounded politics about this. I would wager ten to one that some stay-at-home patriot has been maligning the lad to Morgan. Well, orders are orders; and after all, perhaps Schuyler is the best man to send forward."

So for miles the colonel communed with himself when he ought to have been thinking of more vital things, such as keeping a bright eye out for news; and Stuart, after a mile or two, seeing how abstracted he was, asked if he should attend to the couriers, and received only an unheeding nod as his reply. Whereupon Stuart promptly fell back and directed two men to fall out, halt long enough to smoke a pipe, then follow at a trot. Twenty minutes or more later two more were detached under similar orders; and then others, till the way behind

them was dotted with links of communication. Then he signalled Gavin Paynt, who had accompanied him in a self-appointed capacity of orderly, to bring up Tartar, who thus far had been led by Gavin that he might be as fresh as possible when the time of need arose.

"You may shift the saddle, Gavin. It is time for me to go forward with the advance guard."

"But, Cap'n, yo' shorely ain't goin' to ride Tartar down thar!" expostulated Gavin, his eyes screwed up in a squint of amazement.

The colonel, who was riding near, roused himself enough to listen.

"Certainly, Gavin; it's the general's orders."

"But I stood nigh, Cap'n, an' he did n't say nothin' about Tartar that I heered."

"No. But he expects me to draw Tarleton out of his den, and that is the surest way to do it."

"But — doggone it, Cap'n, he'll know that black as fur as a buzzard kin see a dead coon, an' if he catches yo' thar won't be a tree in all South Carliny high enough

ter suit him! an' I don't know but what he 'll tie yo' ter a pitch-pine instid an' set it alight. Don't do it, Cap'n, now! don't!"

"Yes, I dare say he would — if he caught me, Gavin. But that is what he will not do, at least alive. Come — must I do it myself?"

The man reluctantly dismounted and proceeded to obey orders, but paused for a moment to say: —

"Anyway, Cap'n, yo 'll shorely take me with you? I kin shoot — right smart, an' I mout be needed thar."

"Yes — and glad to have you, Gavin. And while you are about it, pick out for me about a dozen of the best shots and the most reliable men to go on with me. Ask the sergeant yonder whom to take. They are all strangers to me, so I have no choice. Tell them they may have to ride hard for their lives, so that they 'll know in advance just what to expect, and don't take any one who seems backward about it."

"Right, sir. I 'll see ter it. An' I won't have ter ask the sergint, nuther. I 've fit alongside o' these fellers befo'.

Most any half a score 'd be good enough if their hosses be. And I 'll take good keer they know what sort o' lad ther cap'n is, too!" he muttered to himself as he fell back to execute his orders. "What 's been eatin' Old Morgan that he should talk agin him like that? Mebbe he did n't s'pose I could hear way off thar, but I did, an' for all he kep' sich a stiddy face as though he was a wooden man for the minute, I 'll bet a coon-skin the cap'n heerd him too. Looky hyar, Sergint, yo' know me, er reckin, an' what I says goes. Now, I want Rube Yadkin, Sile Turnipseed, them three red-headed brothers yawnduh, Ike Swisher, an' yo' an' yo'," — to half a dozen more silent riders, — "ter kim out thar whar that clump o' hickories is. I 've got somethin' ter tell ye."

In obedience to a nod from the sergeant the men fell out of line and trotted over to the designated place, standing as closely grouped as their horses would allow, and eying Gavin curiously. They knew him of old as one of Sumter's men.

"Now, fellers, I 've pecked ye out o' ther

crowd as good level-headed men ter go forrard with ther cap'n. But whoever rides after his back has got ter expect ter go whar they throw lead round almighty keerless. So if I've made ary mistake in a man jist let 'im back out er yere right smart now."

"That's all right, Gavin," drawled the nearest man, speaking for the rest. "We'll stick."

"Thought so. Now, the cap'n's goin' plumb up agin Tarleton, a-ridin' o' that black. Now yo' all know what sort o' fiend Tarleton is at best. But the cap'n stole that black right out o' Tarleton's camp, an' 't was his own hoss. P'r'aps some o' you know what Tarleton's likely ter be at his wust!" and he paused and looked around grimly, enjoying the decided sensation among the men as they stared at him, at the unconscious Tartar in the van, and at his rider, alternately.

"Wot for does he do it?" asked Rube Yadkin in open-eyed wonder.

"Cos he's ordered. Old Morgan wants Tarleton drawed out o' that, an' picks the cap'n out ter do it. Ther cap'n says ter

himself, Tartar 's ther best bait, so Tartar I 'll ride ; an' I could n't get him out o' ther idee nohow. Now I know that lad well enough ter know that when it comes ter ther scratch he 'll send every man back ter the rear before he starts himself. An' if he gits lead or if Tartar does, Tarleton will do his level best ter git a holt of him. Now I want you fellers ter swear ter keep an eye skinned fer him no matter what happens — no matter what happens," he repeated impressively. "Fer if we don't bring him back with us, either alive or dead, I fer one don't want ter ever see camp nor Sumter's men agin."

And without seeming to notice, nevertheless Stuart wondered not a little at the way which that squad of hardy raiders eyed him as they fell in behind his back in a close knot according to order, and at their prompt obedience to his slightest wish then and numerous days afterward. Gavin knew his audience well. Not a man but was riding a horse which had not been bought nor paid for; but for the most part they came from friends, or at least from tories.

That their leader, young though he was, was riding a steed reft from the blood-red hands of their most dreaded enemy by his own craft made him their leader indeed, more definitely than all the commissions that ever came from Congress could do; even as Comanche or Cheyenne esteemed his own war-chief by like accomplishment. So, far in advance of the main battalion rode the lad in the dun-yellow buckskin hunting-shirt, conspicuous for very lack of uniform among the riders in green; and far from regarding it with disapproval they deemed it one more evidence of their leader's good, sound war-sense, and chuckled to themselves accordingly.

Ere they lost touch with the battalion, however, Gavin Paynt reined back his horse with the air of one who has forgotten something, and cantered back for a moment. Drawing rein alongside of Colonel Washington, like the free, independent Southerner that he was, he said in a low, confidential voice: —

"Cunn'l, havin' ears, I could n't well help a-hearin' what the gineral said ter ye

about Cap'n Schuyler; an' I just want ter say that ther gineral's got some confounded bee in his bonnet about it that 's all totally wrong. We men with Sumter owe our lives ter 'im, an' I owe mine twice over; an' I jist want ter say that if any man tries ter carry out that last order o' ther gineral that man 'll die in his tracks right thar; an' it won't be over healthy country round about fer ther one what gives the order ter 'im, nuther."

There was a glint in the man's eye as he said it that was in striking variance with the cool, lazy drawl of his voice. Having said it, he dropped the rein on his horse's neck with an unconscious movement, as of one who was expecting action of some sort, and, it being war time, both hands and his rifle might as well be free for service.

But the colonel impulsively held out his own hand across the space between them and grasped Gavin's in a hearty clasp.

"Good! good! I don't know the lad as you do, but I could n't believe that the general was right about him, for he seemed to be good and true. And I thank you for

coming straight to me, like a man. I must obey orders, of course, and "keep an eye" on him; but there are two ways of doing that, and thanks to you I now know which is the right way. You need not fear for him while he is under my command. But I wish you could tell me what it is that has set the general to suspect him."

This, however, was more than Gavin Paynt could do, nor, for that matter, could the general himself, had he been there. Two very good people can nevertheless have an antipathy for each other, yet be able to give no reason for it. The subject was of such interest, and the colonel was so specially interested in Gavin's account of how Stuart had warned Sumter of the coming raid of Tarleton, that time flew faster than they were aware, and presently Silas Turnipseed came back to them at a keen run, almost dashing into the line as he rounded a clump of trees.

"Ther cap'n's respec's sir!" he said, saluting, "an' he's caught three tories a-scoutin'. Took 'em clean by surprise, 'fore they'd any idee of us bein' round or 'fore

they 'd ary chance ter cook up a yarn atween 'em. He kep' 'em apart an' went a-gunnin' fer news" — here the man grinned in spite of himself at some humorous recollection — "an' they all tell 'bout ther same story, as how Tarleton 's at Ninety-Six with a lot o' men. One says a thousan', 'nother says twelve hundred, an' ther third, who seems a bit the most knowin', makes it eleven. An' as that splits ther difference the cap'n thinks as it 's 'bout right. So he sends me back to have ther news passed on ter ther gineral."

The colonel listened eagerly, his fine face lighting with excitement, and turning in his saddle he beckoned to the nearest man.

"Ride back at full speed to the nearest relay, and bid him forward the news to General Morgan that Colonel Tarleton is reported by three different tories to be at Ninety-Six with about eleven hundred men. Remain on the relay in the man's place. Off with you!"

And the man went off like a shot.

"What became of the prisoners?" he continued, turning to the messenger.

"Yo 'll find them tied up ter some handy trees a right smart chance along thar, sir. Ther cap'n 's kept right on; an' if you please, sir, I 'd like ter git right back ter 'im."

"Anything about to happen?"

"Er reckin' so, sir. 'Pears like as how he 's a-goin' ter go a-whoopin' right inter Tarleton's quarters an' wake 'im up like a wasp's nest; an' I want ter be thar to take a hand."

Gavin Paynt uttered a dismayed exclamation.

"I 'm off!"

The next moment his horse was stretched out in a keen run; and before he had vanished around the turn the messenger, catching the order before it was well uttered, was making the ground thunder under the tread of his horse in hot pursuit; and the colonel, rising in his stirrups, turned to his eager men, and with a wave of his gauntleted hand shouted, —

"Attention! Forward!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE TEMPTING OF TARLETON.

OH, then there was riding indeed, that day! No better horsemen than our men of the South ever strapped a spur to a shoeless foot; and it was not every foot in that little troop that wore a shoe in those days. Some wore moccasins. And all wore in their faces an eager, intent look; the gaze of men who can foretell the future to their satisfaction, and to whom only the good therein is revealed as yet.

They had prowled around the British like wolves in the night. Like wolves they had set upon and overcome the stragglers from the herd, and had taught them over and over again the stern lesson that their safety lay in the herd only, and not elsewhere; and all this was but their own preliminary lesson in the art of predatory war. Now in that reckless safety which lies in the heart

of audacity like the central vacuum in a candle's flame, they were to plunge straight at the daylight camp of Tarleton himself!

So each man took a fresh grip on his horse's rein, and even as he rode saw to it that his rifle was ready for sudden use.

And first they came on three dead horses by the roadside, at which the leading steeds shied violently. Then a little further they came on three tories, each hugging affectionately the trunk of a hickory with arms and legs, as they sat at their respective bases; and lest they forget their duty, hands and feet were tied together; and at the moment one was finding the rough trunk of the utmost service in removing an impertinent bug from a promenade along his nose.

The men set up a shout of laughter at the sight as they swept by, but the sullen tories answered never a word, but ducked their heads to avoid the showers of sand from the sputtering hoofs, and wriggled when ounces of it found lodgment down their necks. The way of a patriot is hard, especially when on the losing side *pro tem.*

But "Forward!" was the word. This was no time to tarry for the tending of prisoners now; and the colonel choked down a laugh himself as he waved his hand for silence in the ranks. Then before them appeared a little glade, and in the centre of it a man holding up his hand for caution, and at the signal of their leader the troop drew rein and filed right and left on either side, until the sun shone hotly down upon the opening filled with stamping, restless horses, with their riders boot to boot.

"What is it, Yadkin?"

"The cap'n's respec's, Cunnel, an' thar 's a medder right ahead. Acrosst ther middle of it 's a dry run. Beyond that thar's good chargin' ground, an' beyond that he 's found a picket o' Tarleton's men. He wants ter drive that in, an' while doin' of it, says as how mebbe you mought hide you-all in the bottom of the run; an' if he draws ary badgers out er their holes he 'll come back full jump an' gin a whistle when it 's time ter let drive. The picket don't know nothin' about it yet."

"Sure about that?"

"Sartain, Cunnel."

"Is the run clear in sight?"

"Not an inch of it. Would n't 'a' known 't was thar, myself."

"How did you find it out without the picket seeing you, then?"

"The cap'n did that, er reckon, Cunnel. He showed us as how the grass was a different colour about thar; an' ter prove it, he 'n' I snaked in on our bellies an' part way across the medder beyond. He went one side an' I t' other. I thought I was some at deer-stalkin'; but doggone it, he kin creep up ter the tail of a wide-awake painter! that thar yeller shirt of his 'n is jest a good squar' dead-grass colour, an' if yer take yer eyes off 'n him in tall hay 't aint none so easy ter find him agin."

"Hum!" and the colonel meditated a moment over the news.

"All right, Yadkin. Tell him to go ahead, but be careful not to get ambushed himself. As soon as we see the backs of the picket out of sight we 'll hunt for cover in the run. Is it big enough for us all?"

"Oh, plenty. Drops down kinder steep

on this side, but slopes up jest lovely on t' other."

With that, Yadkin backed out from the group around him and started for the woods which encircled the glade. But before he vanished he halted his horse, and with characteristic hunter's caution refreshed the priming of his rifle, which weapon, thereafter, he held in one hand ready for instant use.

The colonel rode on after him alone, and presently found that the woods were but a thin mask or curtain separating the glade from quite an expanse of open ground. Peering out cautiously from the shadow, he saw the whole performance: the picket of half a dozen men, squatting under a clump of trees to which their horses were tethered; the advent of a group of green-clad men, with a yellow hunting-shirt in their midst, from the woods not far from himself; their slow trot to the channel, into which they disappeared as though diving into deep water; their sudden reappearance as from the very ground, considerably nearer to the picket, showing where the bed

of the ancient watercourse wound its devious way into the heart of the plain; the plunging of the tethered horses at the apparition; the leaps of the picket to their feet and their rush for the steeds, and the scattering in the air of a pack of cards which sailed around and plunged into the shrubbery like huge grasshoppers, betraying by their presence one cause of the success, thus far, of the continental approach; the rush and charge of the men in green, and the hasty flight of the others; — then with an excited laugh he backed his own horse out of the bushes and sped back to his command.

"Come on, men!"

And with a break-up of confabbing circles they came stringing out of the enclosure, and after a brief canter buried themselves in the gully even as had their advance-guard. The grass rustled and hissed as they tore along the bottom, until they reached the other side of the bend; then, strung along it ready for a charge in line, there was nothing to do but wait.

But not for long. Not many minutes

later came the sound of guns again, and presently a light bay horse appeared among the trees, coming at a dead run. Then after him came others, their riders leaning low over their horses' withers and looking back. But where was the captain?

"There he is!" burst from the lips of half a dozen simultaneously, as with tufts of grass stuck in their hatbands they peered out beneath the disguising thatch and over the tops of the sedges which they so much resembled. Yes, there he was indeed, his black horse lagging far behind the others, while again and again a gun was raised among the pursuing group and lowered again as the watchful rider ducked to avoid the coming shot, and the gunner was reluctant to run the risk of killing a good horse which seemed likely to come to hand shortly without trouble. It was as exciting as a play, or, better, the flight of a retiarius in a Roman amphitheatre as he gathers in his net in readiness for another cast at his deadly foe. And now the net was gathered, and the time to swing its encircling mesh was at hand.

With a touch of the spur and an encouraging word, Tartar shot forward like a bolt from an arbalest; forward and far to one side. And at the instant the war-sharpened wit of the pursuer warned him of some snare in this black miracle, and there was a checking of eager horses. Then came the shrilling of a whistle, sweet, penetrating, yet sending a cold shiver down the spines of men from over-sea; for there was a sinister significance in that sweetness, like unto honey from nightshade, which man eats but once.

And then, with cheers and sardonic laughter came the charge of armed men, like a fresh sowing of dragons' teeth, along that peaceful meadow as they sprang in a long line of horsemen from the very soil. And then the flight, and that which has already been told. And presently back came the riders laughing, their horses panting and champing their restraining bits, eager for another wild burst of speed like the last.

The colonel shook his captain heartily by the hand.

"That was well done, Schuyler, — well planned, well carried out. Now the problem is, what will those fellows do next? They can't rest easy under this insult."

"We shall see Colonel Tarleton, I think, sir, about as soon as he can get his horse saddled, if he is in that camp."

"I think so myself. Well, let him come. That is what we are here for."

"Excuse me, Colonel, but I would suggest that we get back to the woods. This meadow is too open for us."

"Why, you are n't afraid, are you?"

The question was put so laughingly, and even as the colonel's own horse was quickened into motion, that there was no sting in it.

"No, sir; I cannot say that I am afraid, under present circumstances, for you know Tarleton. But of course if he came out in force here in his usual impetuous way he would overwhelm us in an instant, from sheer power of numbers. I am afraid General Morgan does not realize how strong the colonel is just now. The Britisher always has his men hard, seasoned fellows, stern

fighters; and a thousand of them would be a tough nut for our small force to crack unless we have very much the vantage in position. I hope you will impress that on the general's mind, if I may venture to say it."

"And on my word, I believe he is coming out now!"

It was true, at least, that beyond the meadow the other side of which Washington's men had reached apparently but in the nick of time, a line of scurrying horsemen was deploying hurriedly as the platoons came out from their rear and found places in the rank.

"Ready, men!" cried the colonel, no less promptly. "Give them one volley, then into the woods every son of you!"

There was an instant, sputtering crash and roar, the echoes of which reverberated among the trees, and the horses in the opposing line here and there shied excitedly, throwing the alignment into confusion. But the distance was greater than the colonel had calculated. One man dropped like a plummet from his saddle, and lay still, but only one. The rest yelled defiantly, and

looked around for the word of command to charge. But the lieutenant whose duty it was to give it lay on the sward under his horse's feet, and ere another officer had reached the front the line of their enemies had faded like mist, and there was nothing to charge against but trees; and since the Blackstocks affair, Tarleton's officers had been a little shy of ordering charges against unknown forces in such array, whatever their colonel himself might think. So the captain sent back prompt word of the situation to the colonel, and in orthodox style dismounted a platoon of his auxiliary tories and sent them across the meadow in a strong skirmish line, his own men standing ready to cover them with a volley at any who might be rash enough to interfere with their advance.

Colonel Washington watched the proceedings narrowly.

"Load with three buckshot and a ball, men, you who have smoothbores," he said coolly. "That must hit something, even in a grass patch. Fire when you see a waving tuft of grass, and aim well under."

So presently a gun spoke out sharply, as some keen hunter's eye detected the flutter of meadow sedge; and after one or two trials as to the precise angle at which to "aim under," the grass around those spots suddenly ceased to be troubled, save by the natural waving of the breeze; and becoming convinced of the uselessness of this, with a yell Tarleton's men dashed, mounted, halfway across the meadow and into the run, which they had discovered for themselves, or of which perhaps they had prior knowledge. And from here each puff of smoke drew a dangerous return in a hail of balls, some of which began to find the mark as now and then a cry told. Meanwhile, stealthily the advance of the snakes-in-the-grass began again; and some already had reached the wood far to right and left beyond the frontage guarded by the slender line; and now and then the crack of a stick or an incautious rustle marked their approach. Then from troops which had been left beyond the meadow came a sudden burst of cheering.

"Tarleton has come at last, sir," said

Stuart, quietly, to his colonel, as the latter rode over to inspect his part of the line. "I hear their flankers also, over yonder. They will take us in the rear in about ten minutes, now. Meanwhile — "

There was a bleat from a battered bugle beyond the plain, and Stuart said as to himself, —

"Here they come!"

The colonel looked at him inquiringly, then needed no explanation, as with a slight pause to gather their horses well in hand the troopers in the rear threw themselves forward at a sharp canter, making the ground tremble beneath them; and at the moment those in the run, encouraged, burst from their concealment and rode straight at the trees.

There was an instant flicker of flame among the interstices of the coverts, and yells from the charging men. "Three buckshot and a ball" indeed were likely to hit something at such a time. But before the echoes of the discharge died away Washington wheeled his horse, and the mellow notes of his hunting-horn drifted

like the cooing of a wood-dove through the smoke-wreathed forest; and with a rush and crackle and snapping of limbs the men of the woods and swamps poured from either side into the narrow roadway by which they had come and streamed away rearward at full speed. The colonel himself tarried in the glade until the last man of his troop had passed him; indeed, until several of the opposing force burst through the bushes across the opening, tearing the blinding veil of vines and leaves from before their eyes. Then with a gallant wave of his gauntlet toward his foes he followed his retreating men and swept through the forest like an antlered stag.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW LORD EGERTON CHEERED A DEED OF DARING, AND TARLETON'S WRATH THEREAT.

COLONEL BANASTRE TARLETON sat on his second best horse, splashed and muddy.

A yard of grapevine twined around his neck. It felt cold and clammy, and altogether suggestive. Some day he might be taken by the enterprising enemy. He gave an involuntary shiver, and flung it off with a muttered remark which he did not print in his memoirs.

There was some reason for his discontent. The road before him appeared to have disappeared. On one hand was the forest, dank, dense, suggestive of snakes in their season and pestilent rebels in any season. On the other hand had been a branch department of the same forest, but a freakish

tornado one day had twisted the largest pine out of its boots and stood it on its head, incidentally smashing several acres of woodland into inextricable confusion. Between these two dilemmas had run the road, which now took a dive underneath a mountain of boughs as tangled with the cordage of huge vines as was ever the mast of a wrecked frigate.

Boughs and vines were green, and the colonel was in no uncertainty as to how they came there.

Blocked by the leafy dam, his whole force was resting on its arms for a mile at least rearward, and in among the branches the glint of steel and the crash of rending wood came at rapid intervals. They were good axemen, too, who swung their weapons there. One of them had cleared quite a space of brushwood until he could work effectively at his greater task; and now, holding the axe by the end of the helve and swinging it with both hands, blow after blow fell as regularly as the ticking of a clock, true as a die, and at every third stroke the dexterous flirt of his iron wrist

wrenched from the trunk of the fallen tree a chip as large as a soup-plate without causing a break in the rhythm of his strokes. The colonel watched him moodily, scarce knowing why.

To the sullen officer suddenly appeared an apparition of substantial make, as from the rear an officer came trotting up, followed at a respectful distance by a weary-looking escort. The officer himself, however, looked as trim and ruddy of face as though fresh from the banquet board.

"Well, Colonel, 'Tarleton's Horse' seems to be 'Tarleton's Foot' to-day, by right of progress, else I had hardly caught up with you ere night. The infantry alone seemed a league along the road."

"Lord Egerton!" — and the colonel looked back at him over his shoulder in angry surprise, — "how the mischief did you get here?"

"Oh, followed your tracks, Colonel," replied the young lieutenant, cheerfully, looking curiously at the barrier before them. "The earl sent me to tell you that Leslie is to keep along abreast of you within sup-

porting distance, so that if you find the enemy too strong for you a courier will bring speedy aid. A corps of pioneers would be no bad addition to the force, it seems; but those fellows slash away like good ones. Gad! it makes me warm just to see them."

"Thanks for the earl's kindness," — and there was a strong flavour of sarcasm in the colonel's voice which he took no pains to conceal, — "but I've chased Sumter in the South, and my fear now is only that he will prove too swift in his flight."

"But you are not chasing Sumter this time, you know," said Lord Egerton, amiably.

The colonel simply stared.

"The earl has reliable word from loyalists that Morgan is before you, not Sumter."

"Well, what's the difference? In either case he is before me so certainly that there is no predicting when we can overtake him. These rebels can run like their own long-legged hogs in a canebrake in bear time."

What might have been said next was

destined to remain unspoken, for the axeman suddenly dropped out of sight among the débris of his own making, while the crack of a solitary rifle came from somewhere faintly beyond the barrier. There was a momentary confusion, a hasty crashing of men who forced their way eagerly in search of the slayer; then another took up the work where his predecessor left off, and the chopping was resumed as regularly as ever. Neither officer looked toward the fallen axeman. It was merely one of the incidents of war. And he was only a loyalist. Yet some one once loved him, somewhere, and perhaps did so still.

"The difference lies in the nature of the two men, Colonel," said the lieutenant, resuming the conversation. "Sumter is of a 'cut-and-come-again' order, and never has many men with him. Morgan is of higher rank, and has proved a stubborn fighter before to-day; so he is sure to have a larger force."

"Well, large or small, he is not likely to be a match for my eleven hundred rascals, half of whom are fit to be hung if they live

until peace is proclaimed; and I'm more likely still to overtake him.

"There! That infernal tree is giving way at last!" — he broke off, as with a crash the whole massive top of the tree split off from the trunk at the kerf of the axe and slid away from the road, leaving the passage clear save for the severed butt, at which already a gang of men was tugging.

"Now, Leftenant, keep a good eye out for an ambush as you go back. I must march."

"But I am not to go back," laughed the lieutenant. "It struck me I should see more service with you just now, and the earl kindly gave me leave to join you."

"The very thing! I am short an officer, thanks to some long-haired Greek in the mob yonder, and need another aide. Now then," he shouted, — "For-r-r'ard!"

And the horses, well rested by the delay, responded spiritedly to the spur and the column took up its march again. But it was weary, exasperating work. The endless trampling of the hoofs in the soft earth, the rumble and thump of wheels

against projecting roots, the crack of the drivers' whips, the jingle of steel rings seemed strangely out of place in that quiet forest, otherwise so silent, with not even a bird winging its way across from tree to tree, whose tall trunks loomed upward in the dusky shadows in places as thick as palisades, or gigantic organ-pipes. They could go but slowly here. Then there would be a glade or clearing across which with hearty relief at the change the footmen would dash at a double, and the horses would go plunging in full career only to dive into the forest again at a slower gait on the other side. Only the extreme van even saw an enemy; although now and then by the roadside the little army had to pass grim evidence that there were enemies in that peaceful forest; and finally, too restless to remain in the centre of the column, the lieutenant-colonel and Lord Egerton took advantage of a break in the woodland to canter to the front.

"Anything to be seen, Durgin?" asked the colonel, shortly, as he joined the officer in command of the leading platoon.

"Very little, Colonel, except trees. I think there's a little company of rebels keeping pace with us just ahead, and watching for chances to fell a tree or break a bridge; but we are not giving th. n time to fell a large tree, and a small one would not stay us five minutes. It's about time now that they did something again, and I am a bit puzzled to know why they don't begin."

"They know who is after them," remarked the lieutenant-colonel, complacently; and Lord Egerton smiled at a convenient tree-trunk near.

"Yes," said Captain Durgin, innocently, "I have been pressing them rather closely for the last few miles. I suppose it keeps them walking."

The lieutenant-colonel looked somewhat discomposed, and Lord Egerton laughed outright, not having the fear of temporary commanding officers in his mind.

"Yes, yes; that is as it should be!" said Tarleton, a little hastily, affecting not to hear the cachinnation in his rear. "Are not the trees thinning out there, ahead?"

"Thar's a medder yawnduh," broke in a

tall, lank tory, a typical Southerner of the canebrakes, who was acting as scout-master to the troops. Then as though he had exhausted his stock of ideas he relapsed into silence as suddenly as he had spoken, and chewed vigorously at a lump of very black tobacco.

"Good! now we can get on faster for a while — so long as it lasts."

"Thar's two medders," said the guide again. "Fust one, then t' other."

And so it proved. It was delightful to get out of the gloom of the trees even for a minute, and the entire van struck into a keen run and streamed across the clearing like the first flight in a fox-hunt, thereby overtaking and swallowing up the scouts. As a result they all plunged into the little curtain of trees beyond the glade together, and found themselves at the startled heels of a troop of horsemen who were trotting along leisurely enough, not expecting so sudden an overtaking.

Instantly both Tarleton and his aide gave vent to a delighted "View Halloo!" which sent their intended quarry darting across

the second meadow like frightened hares; but two or three of them swung round in their saddles as they fled and sent back a Parthian shot or two, which had the luck to take effect in the leading horses, three of whom dropped to the shot; whereupon Tarleton, Lord Egerton, and Captain Durgin promptly came as many croppers, landing a yard or more beyond their horses' noses as the beasts floundered across the fallen steeds in front of them.

"Fire! Fire on the hounds!" yelled the lieutenant-colonel promptly, ere he had risen an inch in his upward spring; and with equal promptness the woods echoed with the roar of the firelocks of his men, while the ragged lead hissed and hummed above his head. There was a single answering cry as the rearmost horse of the retreating continentals winced at the shot, reared, and fell backward with a crash, while his rider, after flinging himself clear, took a step or two onward, faltered, fell, then on hands and knees crept back to where his horse was lying and sank down behind it as behind a breastwork, his long rifle brought to

bear full on the group of officers, yet in a strange, wavering fashion, as of one uncertain of his own purpose, or dazed with a shock and wound.

"Well, we 've got one of them, anyhow," growled the lieutenant-colonel, as he rose from the damp earth with some agility and sought refuge behind his horse. "Spread out there, men; deploy right and left till you flank him and pick him off."

The troopers obediently wheeled their horses on either side, and halting, deliberately began to reload their pieces, not appearing to be in any special haste about it, but as though they were enjoying the game and did not want it too soon over.

"Why not take the poor devil prisoner, Colonel?" asked the lieutenant, suddenly. "I dare say he 'll surrender if we give quarter."

"I dare say he will, when I give it!" was the cold reply.

The lieutenant turned away with a feeling of disgust. It was one thing to see men fall in the excitement of battle. But this cold, deliberate despatching of a wounded

man without offer of mercy was not war; it was murder. And he knew it, and was powerless to prevent it. He looked away from that spot at which all other eyes of the troop were centred and toward the opposite woodland. Then he started, and though about to speak thought better of it, and remained silent, yet as though riveted to the spot.

Half-way between those woods and the fallen horse another horse was coming like the wind across the grasses, — a horse as black as coal, his head foreshortened so that red nostrils and eyes seemed a group of glowing irons fresh from the forge, and riderless, so far as one could see. Not ten seconds had he been in range of the lieutenant's wondering vision when he came skimming over the sedge and halted alongside of the dead horse, throwing aloft with a triumphant toss his own noble head, while his jetty mane and tail streamed in the swirl of wind brought by his coming. Then from somewhere or nowhere, or from his clinging place on the other side, a rider shot into view, who seemed just a flash of yellow

as he rose in the air then dropped on the nearer side and in full view. Then back he went to saddle again, but more slowly, steadily; and with him, swung like a child by the might of one iron arm and muscle-rounded shoulder, went the wounded man, still clinging to his rifle. Then like the wind the black once more went whistling across the grasses as though his double burden was as naught, although two sturdy riders hung and clung respectively, low-lying to evade the pursuing bullets which by all rights ought to come.

No scene in the theatre at home that Lord Egerton ever saw was so thrilling to the very soul as that! The red blood rushed to his face, went tingling to his finger-tips; and while at right and left dazed troopers sat in their saddles, ramrod in hand, or holding useless bullets in their arrested fingers, and gazed in blank amazement at the horse lying prostrate in the grass, and at the swallow-flight of the black steed now just vanishing into the shadows of the trees, the young lieutenant tore his helmet from his head, and holding it on high his clear

voice went ringing across the meadow, and echoed sharply from the circling forest.

"Bravo, Stuart! Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!"

And after a brief, blank pause, every man in sight of English birth — save one — hurled his yell of applause into the ringing medley of wild shouting, while the tories looked at each other, and at their excited comrades in arms in angry amaze. Safe in the gloom of the woods a rider turned his head and gazed long and earnestly backward, striving to determine from whence that familiar voice had come, shouting his own name. What friend had he among those bitter enemies? And back in the meadow, as the clamour ceased, came the stern, cold voice of the colonel, —

"Leftenant Egerton, report yourself to my provost as under arrest for encouraging rebellion. Forward, all!"

Then the leafy curtain seemed to drop between pursuer and pursued as the cheer for daring unselfishness, for that true nobleness which brings to light all that is noble in other men, was among the things that

were, and the unrelenting chase began again. And far away on the flank, from the forest, like an echo to Tarleton's command, came the sleepy snarl of an awakened wildcat disturbed in his siesta on a massive bough.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GIRL IN MASSACHUSETTS.

DOWN in the Carolinas the wind was sweeping across sodden, winter-withered grasses. A thousand miles away to the northeast it was whispering among the dry leaves that clustered around the heavy limbs of a giant beech like russet curls around the crown of a huge, elderly giant shorn at the top by Time.

It was nearly noon. Up through the branches of that beech drifted a light smoke of burning wood and a most savoury smell of something good which was cooking in the pot upon the fire. The pot hung by a bit of trace-chain from a beechen pole. Five or six feet from the fire the pole passed through a loop of twisted beechen withe hung from the fork of a stake driven deep through the trampled snow to the earth, three or four feet below. The further end

of the pole rested in a similar fork, and was kept there by the weight of a short log with a short branch on it, by which it was hooked as a counterpoise upon the pole. The snow around the fire was trampled hard, and partially carpeted with a mat of hemlock boughs. The fire itself was built upon the level top of a stump full four feet through, cut off at the level of the trampled snow.

The heavy butt of the beech threw out buttresses of roots on either side which caught and reflected back the fire, and the cold wind which rustled far above was barred from that snug corner by wind-shields of hemlocks growing here and there. Back between those protecting buttresses a squared block of wood with a folded coat upon it made a comfortable seat, and on the seat sat a maiden.

The warmth of the fire had led her to untie her hood of snowy wool. The requirements of tending kitchen made its presence still desirable. The shifting force of the chilled wind demanded a fastening; and the deft fingers of the maiden rose to the occasion and the need, twisting the

woolly shape into what now would have been likened to a Scotch cap; twining the narrow ribbons in and out of the rich, dark hair, in which as the sun fell on it gleamed here and there a glint as of threads of ruddy gold. The result was wholly unfashionable, entirely bewitching; and out upon the nearest mound of untouched snow a great white hare halted in his limping progress, and sat bolt upright on its summit, gazing with bulging eyes at the strange sight, his ears stretched skyward to their full height of utter amazement. The maiden's merry brown eyes looked at him across the fire. His drooping forepaws and eagerly twitching nose were such a comic contrast to the church-spire rigidity of those protesting ears that her low laugh trilled out uncontrolled; whereat the wood-imp promptly turned what seemed a somersault and fled horizontally across the undulations of the snow, leaving a straight trail of squatty impressions, — two long prints bracketing two short prints, — each set six feet or more beyond the last. Whereupon the low laugh followed him the more.

Then the maiden rose, stepped swiftly over to the pole, shifted the clog nearer the fire, lifted the pole from the further fork, and walking in half a circle deposited it in another, reset the weight at its former mark, and turned to the hanging pot now swung far from the fire. With a tiny cup of birch-bark transfixed between the prongs of a forked stick like an oriole's nest she sampled the broth still bubbling, cooled it in the convenient snow-bank, and tasted it; shook her head soberly, and with another forked stick, hook-fashion, reached up and drew down a wooden bucket from where it swung above her head from an elastic bough, safe from small marauders. From this safe cupboard she produced a bit of firm white salt pork, which she cut up into small dice and added to the contents of the pot with a scientific twirl of a clean sliver of shaven pine. Then back swung the pot to the fire again, while the maiden glanced at the shadow of a sun-dial's gnomon to learn the time.

That dial was worth looking at for other reasons. Its face was a stump, cut squarely

level. The hours were "chalked" on it with charcoal. The gnomon was the head of a woodsman's narrow-axe driven deep, with the unerring stroke of a woodsman, perpendicularly into the line which had been determined by a sailor eye with a seaman's compass. And it told the time.

Tiny lines of dots radiated from it in all directions across the snows which had fallen since its making, as though the wild wood-mice in the night had sought to tell by the moon when midnight had come and plan accordingly their deeds of darkness; or perchance they found it a safe watch-tower from whence to peer over into the trampled hollow, on the wooden hearth of which the fire still smoked, in the hope of finding around it fallen treasures in the shape of crumbs.

Meanwhile, by day, the woods at intervals rang with sounds deep set in silence. Now the sudden clank of a chain. Occasionally the tunk of an ox-horn striking against the sapling to which the beast was tethered near its fellow placidly munching hay. Now and then sounds from a yoked

team further away and growing fainter, the slow, frosty creak of the sled-runner in the crushed snow of the wood-road, the straining of the load as the weight of the logs shifted them in the passing of the cradle-knolls, the sudden cry of "Haw!" as the patient oxen swung in their tugging too far to the right and the sled slid scraping against a tree-trunk, followed generally by the admonitory "Gee, Bright!" as in the evolution "Bright," blowing steam from his nostrils against the snow, overstepped the middle line leftward and required bringing back again to central draft.

And, more often than all, the steady, regular stroke of an axeman, uninterrupted for many minutes, till it ended in the rushing roar of a falling tree, snapping and crackling through the limbs of others to bring up with a loud "f-f-fluff!" in the snow, — always a sturdy rock-maple, soon to be riven with wedge and maul. Men then scorned as firewood any other. And the axeman was only Squire Hathaway's hired man, Caleb Whitcomb, cutting the year's supply, which the sturdy squire, with

other help, was sledding out as fast as cut, and was cording up for drying in places more accessible when the winter snows had melted. It was far from the town of Boston whence the squire had come when the occupation by the British dispersed his seafaring friends; and steering his horned craft was novel work for an ex-merchant of ship-chandlery. But war times make changes, and broad-minded men are adaptable to circumstances. It is only the narrow-minded and ill-educated who can do no more when ousted from their rut than to wring their hands and mourn.

Back at the fire Pearl Hathaway had just added a fresh stock of fuel; solid chunks cut from a blasted pine, as lightwood, flanked by sizzling, hissing blocks of green maple for lasting heat; then from a birch-bark "cubbyhole" in the heaped snow beneath the hemlock barrier she drew out a ball of yarn and a half-finished sock, in which presently the slender needles were knitting swiftly, while the sock grew downward by slow degrees. It would have grown faster, perhaps, had the girl not

taken from some still more secret hiding-place a letter, crumpled and weather-stained, and closely written, and smoothing its paper, laid it softly on a slip of clean bark as though it were something precious, and read once more its pages as they lay on the improvised shelf. That letter had come by post rider, by boat, by stage, across the long weary miles that lay between the Berkshire Hills and Sumter's camp in far-away Carolina. And letters were rare things in those days, things to be treasured, read and reread, and not then to be thrown aside.

From the southwestward came across the snows the steady "c-r-r-rump! c-r-r-ump!" of a pair of snow-shoes, the wearer of which, an elderly man with a pair of keenly brilliant eyes, was tramping in a straight line until his ear caught the sound of the distant axe and his nose the scent of the fire. Halting he listened sharply to the one, and sniffed hungrily at the other, while his eyes took on a brighter look. What luggage he had was securely lashed on a moose-sled, which was hauled along by a cord ending in a belt

over the man's shoulder. The sled, being made with two very thin strips of ash some five inches broad, turned backward at the nose so that the same strip served as runner below and rail above, slid easily along the surface. The cross thwarts were fastened to the rails by wooden pins, and yielded at every yaw among the undulations instead of rigidly resisting; hence the vehicle seemed in turn to undulate along, following the lines of least resistance.

Thus it was that Pearl Hathaway again had poked the fire, had reread her letter, had replaced it in its hiding-place, and with an odd, tremulous, far-away smile in her sensitive, pretty face had taken from thence in its turn a well-worn book bound carefully in strong vellum, and from it was alternately conning some lesson and dropping her eyes to her knitting; when a shadow fell athwart the hollow and a stranger glanced down at her with a surprised, amused, somewhat disdainful air, which he did not take the trouble to conceal as she in turn became aware of, and looked up quickly at him.

Lilian Crawford True
1901

"It is a good day, young mistress. Do I hear your husband's axe yonder?"

Why was it that so simple a question should send the swift blood coursing to Pearl's oval face, daintily picked out here and there as it was with the faint gold-dust of a freckle. That is a question which might puzzle a sphinx correctly to answer. So let's leave it to sphinxes.

"That will depend, sir, on who owns the axe when I am wedded," was her prompt reply. "For the present it is swung by Caleb, my father's man. Do you wish me to call him?"

"I thank you, no, madam; I have no errand with him. But by your leave I will rest awhile at your well-kept fire and broil at it a bit of venison."

The man's figure was alert and wiry; but his voice was the voice of age, and from his hat a stray hair or two gleamed grey; and leaping to a swift conclusion Pearl laid aside her book, and rising, said with simple dignity: —

"I pray you take my seat, sir. It is warm and comfortable, and you have come

far. I shall be pleased to attend to the venison."

"Yes," replied the visitor, with a swift look of surprise. "I have come from a distance; but may I ask how you guessed it?"

"Easily, sir," she smiled, as he turned to carve a slice from the haunch on his sled. "The venison is fairly fresh; yet deer are not plenty among these hills."

Then, while he sat in silence and watched her, she raked out a bed of glowing coals, produced a gridiron, and straightway added a new and most delectable scent to the delicious dining odours of the woods. A surprised remark presently caused her to look up from her work, and a flash of dismay and general discomfort crossed her face as she saw that he had coolly taken up her book and was turning its pages one by one with a most singular expression in his eyes.

Catching her glance, his thin face broke into a winning smile that overcame and conquered its former cynicism, and with soft intonation he quoted from the page before him half a dozen lines, beginning,

Γουνοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις, ἢ βροτός ἐσσι;
εἰ μέν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,[1]

rolling out the sonorous hexameters with a loving lingeringness, as of one who has met by surprise a dear and long-lost friend.

"Pardon me for this liberty which I have taken. Yet it is not usual for damsels to study Greek at any time. Hence my surprise at meeting one thus learned here in a snowy forest, skilled also in all housewifely arts, and yet a maiden still. May I ask an explanation?"

"Certainly, sir, you may ask — as my guest," — and her visitor, well accustomed to good society as he was, felt with unaccustomed surprise and discomfiture the delicate thrust of the ladylike reproof.

"In these long winter days there is much leisure, and if brothers will go off to the wars they must not be surprised on their

[1] I am your suppliant, princess. Are you some god or mortal? If one of the gods that hold the open sky, to Artemis, daughter of mighty Zeus, in beauty, height, and bearing I find you likest.

Homer's Odyssey, Book VI., Palmer's Translation.

return to find their sisters have read their books."

The other bowed gravely. "A wise idea, although somewhat novel. Those absent will be seeing new things, broadening their minds, and on their return will find their — sisters have kept pace with them. Your name, then, is — Schuyler?"

His young hostess at the moment had transferred the venison to a wooden plate, which she was preparing to hand to her guest, when he looked up at her and calmly made that statement. A wave of crimson flashed over her face; a sudden confusion of ideas impeded her speech, as she stammered and faltered in a manner that filled her with helpless wrath at herself and at the impulse which had led her to reply so absurdly, so unguardedly, —

"N-no! not — "

To which her guest with the impoliteness of inconsiderate age had smiled quietly and completed the reply with the single monosyllable.

— "Yet!"

And Pearl? — Oh, but she was wrathful

— angry! Her eyes were like stars, and her dainty lips compressed to a thin red line, as without another word she finished her attentions toward the other's comfort, handing him salt, — a rare thing; pepper, — still rarer; a mug of mulled cider, comforting to strangers. Then with a swift eye seeing that all things were done and to the full, as hostess to guest, she deliberately turned her back upon him and crossed to the other side of the fire, where for many minutes she found duties to do in connection with the pot upon the crane and other matters, improvised for the occasion. Meanwhile the other in turn sat provokingly silent, smiling provokingly. She could have slapped him!

CHAPTER XV.

HOW LORD EGERTON FOUND THE CHASE OF A REAR-GUARD A TRIFLE PERILOUS.

"A STERN chase is a long chase!" So days had passed since first the black-eyed British lieutenant-colonel had plunged into keen pursuit of his foes that were flitting so elusively through the valleys among the hills. Watercourses seemed their guides more often than not; and now and then the trail of the continental, like a serpent of old, wound deviously in and out of the fathomless pools of a swamp.

Once or twice this happened where the experienced chief promptly sent scouts around the marsh till they took up the track afresh, then the whole force pounded along at full speed around to the spot and lost but little time; whereupon the trail, like a sentient being, as promptly swung off in a new direction, and the next swamp crossed

was flanked on the one side by a stream without a ford, and on the other by woods too dense for horsemen; hence perforce the troops had to cross the swamp almost in single file, which takes much time with an army of eleven hundred men; while the leading scouts never crossed at all, but lay in their last sleep about midway among the leafy ferns.

Their comrades left them where they fell. But they brought along their horses. Also they sent unavailing shots into various little puffs of smoke, puffs as harmless as thunder, which wavered as the balls tore through them and presently disappeared, disclosing a shot-mark or two scoring the bark of a tree. If it was a tory bullet the mark generally would be about five feet up; if British, it was more likely to be fifteen.

Well up with the van, nevertheless, rode Lord Egerton, keenly watching for some chance to strike. Durgin, the captain, ruefully was riding rearward with his arm in a sling and a bandage around his ribs, his horse led by a trooper who was himself

hardly in better plight. He had halted as he reached the provost-guard, saying,—

"My lord, the leftenant-colonel's compliments, and you are released from arrest and ordered to duty, taking my place with the van — and may the Lord give you better luck than he has me!"

The young lieutenant's countenance brightened wonderfully as he eagerly asked for news.

"News, my lord?" smiled the captain, grimly, "there is n't any. It 's just the same old story. They are too few to be caught, and too vicious to run. They are wildcats for fighting, but in their own fashion, and that is n't ours."

"Are you much hurt, sir?"

"Well, no. That time luck was on my side, after all. It was your friend in yellow on the black. He had two chances, and the first I was lucky enough to dodge part way, and a hole in my bridle arm resulted. I was ass enough not to be content with that, but must needs ride on again, and so give him another sight at me, whereupon he promptly lifted me out of my sad-

dle, and I landed in a bed of mud," — unconscious of the bull. "Faith, this was surely my day, for the beggar's powder was damp, or my ribs immortally stout, or I was just a leetle out of distance, or all three, for a cracked rib was all that I got. But it was n't the fault of his aim, I 'll swear! so look out for yourself, Leftenant. If he gets his eye on you, a guinea to an onion that you don't get my chance to ride back to Ninety-Six!"

So like a mastiff slipped from the leash the young fellow had dashed forward to his place on the danger line, coldly saluting his commander as he passed, while Tarleton's teeth gleamed a little in as cold a smile. The old friendly cordiality was gone. Each knew the other a little better for what he was, and their natures were too opposite to make that knowledge an aid to further friendship. But while the lieutenant was saying to himself, "This is my duty," the lieutenant-colonel was reflecting, "Those fiends of the swamp shoot extremely well, and perhaps Durgin's loss on the whole was opportune."

It is not recorded that the blameless chief was familiar with the Scriptures, in spite of his "Old Testament" ways of warfare; and perhaps David's oriental arrangements respecting his valiant captain Uriah did not occur to him. But they did to Lord Egerton; and calling unto him the leader of the tory scouts, he acquired therefrom various hints of conduct of great practical utility; and thereafter for a day, whenever he moved forward through a swamp, it was on foot. Whenever he saw within sprinting distance three trees from practically the same root — a frequent arrangement of nature — he made a dart for them, and from such locations made his more lengthy outlooks. Whereby presently he roused to unseemly profanity sundry men in green uniforms, dingy and rain-spotted, and caused them some little unprofitable waste of lead.

"See hyar, Cap'n," said one of them, at length. "That skunk in the red jacket 's got a charm that 'll turn a bullet. Sile Turnipseed, Rube Yadkin, 'n' I 've all had our turns at him this day, and durned if we

kin hit 'im, nohow. An' yet, the scamp knows altogether too much to be left around loose. Hit 's dangerous-like. Yo 'd better hev' a try."

So, presently, the daring lieutenant suddenly saw a great light as he peered warily from his three trees. The earth came up behind and smote him with a crash, and yet, somehow, he heard the crash before the blow. Then, some time later, he woke up to the fact that he was lying calmly on his back, looking up at the blue sky from under the brim of his head-gear, and at a deep score across the trunk of the central tree just about two inches above what had been the level of his eyes. His comprehension dawning like a slow-coming day, he searched, and presently found a companion score along the side of his own head, where the ball with deadened force had given him a welt which he was likely to remember for some time. And past him were filing troops with hurrying tread of eager horses. Also he was assisted in his grasp of the situation by seeing the grim face of his escort sergeant eclipsing the view heavenward and

felt that his own head was being supported on a friendly knee.

"Eh? what? where? who? hah?" he remarked lucidly, winking rapidly and nestling down with a comfortable little wiggle inside his uniform, much like a disturbed chrysalis within a cocoon. "Who struck me? What is it?"

"It is war, my lord!" was the sententious reply, as the relieved sergeant whipped partly erect and whisked away in haste a tear which was wholly surprised at its own advent in a country so foreign to all of its kind; while the stern, soldierly mouth beneath lost its martial rigidity in a smile so full of relief and happiness that the face to which it belonged looked positively human.

"War in a swamp, an' Injun fightin'. The Leftenant got a spent ball along the side of his head from that devil in yellow. If he ever falls into our hands, as the Lord lives, we 'll roast him alive!"

The lieutenant sat up and brushed fragments of bark out of his hair. "Nonsense, Sergeant! You know better than to say

that. He 's a brave fellow, and is doing his duty as he sees it, like a soldier. As you said yourself, this is war. And if we live through it and ever have to fight, ourselves, as a rear-guard, we shall do well to remember the lessons in that business that he is teaching us this day. Where 's the firing line? I don't hear shots."

"Miles ahead, by this time, sir. The rear-guard with the wounded are already in sight. Shall I find the Leftenant a place in a cart?"

"Cart be hanged. No! Give me a hand up, Sergeant. There!" — straddling dizzily for a moment till his eyes got their bearings again. "I 'm all right. Come on. My place is in the vanguard;" and in spite of ventured expostulation and a headache of much size the vigorous young fellow caught up his sword from the moss and started off at a rapid lope along the watercourse which bordered the route just here, blithely answering surprised recognitions from brother officers who last had seen him flat among the ferns. As the labouring sergeant afterward reported to his friends,

"The leftenant went ahead as though he was born jumpin', and been at it ever since."

There was a lull in the warfare as he reached the front. Not an enemy was in sight, and the colonel himself had dismounted and sat upon a huge log, sheltered from hostile view by still larger tree-trunks.

"Eh? you are not a ghost, Leftenant? Sit down and share my rations," he said, with a cordiality that surprised himself as well as the lieutenant. Repentance sometimes comes to a man for evil thoughts and deeds before it is too late, — not often enough, however, to count upon. And Tarleton was genuinely glad, after all, to see the aide still in good fighting order. Besides, it was one man more for his command, and even men counted now, as well as horses.

"I see we have halted, sir;" and Lord Egerton accepted the situation and the ration, of which last he was particularly glad just then.

"Must! the nags are tired, and there is grass enough for a bite around this glade. — Pluto! bring me that bottle from my

saddle-bags, and don't break it as you value your neck! — The men must eat, too. Besides, we can afford it. We must be gaining on them, — but here comes Pluto. Leftenant — to his Majesty the King, and may his enemies all stretch hemp!"

In after days Lord Egerton often thought of that bivouac on the warm trail of their elusive foe; the weary horses eagerly gathering what comfort they could from the grasses that still showed green and rank along the stream, the men, regardless of dampness, stretched out luxuriously, staring up at the moss-bearded boughs between bites, and as indifferent to war matters as though upon a picnic, all save the ever watchful picket-guard. Aside from the low hum of the force that lay in a long line along the winding stream the woods were singularly silent.

"The rebels seem to have had enough of it, Colonel. You have chased them often, — do they usually put up so good a fight while on the run?"

"No, I believe not; but there's a difference. This time they've some uncom-

monly skilful scamp in charge. Then, too, we cannot move fast enough here, with our large force, to give them a panic; and we cannot yet detach a swift platoon or two and give them a benefit, for there are too many of them. You may not know it, Leftenant, but the trail shows that they have been joined by some good-sized parties since we started. But these everlasting hills must come to an end somewhere and give us good riding ground; and then will be our time to make a dash for them and flesh our steel. Don't fear, my lord! you 'll see service enough yet to warrant your riding with Tarleton. We have hardly begun as yet."

"The earl foresaw this," said the lieutenant, thoughtfully, forgetting for the moment to attack his ration. "He thought it more than likely, sir, that as we chased them through the hills they would be joined by armed bands of mountaineers until they might possibly become quite too strong for us."

"Pooh! nonsense! The more they are, the more they 'll get in each other's way and

serve our turn!" retorted the senior officer, placing the bottle to his lips once more most heartily for a goodly number of seconds.

"A gathering army would become dangerous, no doubt; but a gathering of countrymen with no discipline among them worth speaking of is like a bringing of sheep to the shambles where the butchers are ready."

The lieutenant winced at that. It was brutal, and jarred against his finer nature. So he held his peace for some minutes.

"I fancy the earl had Ferguson's fate in mind, sir," he remarked presently. "It was just such a chase and a gathering of clans that caught him at King's Mountain. That was why he insisted on Leslie's keeping within supporting distance of us."

"If he is—" retorted the other with a short laugh. "I have n't troubled my head much about his whereabouts. I suppose he is in the woods somewhere to the southeast. We shall not need him, but it will give his men good practice in marching to try to keep up with us. As to the clans you speak of, do not forget, sir, that it was their habit ever to run toward Ferguson,

and to run from Tarleton. And it is Tarleton who is after them now, — which reminds me, — Trumpeter! sound 'boots and saddles.' Leftenant, if you feel equal to it, I shall be glad to have you return to the van. But take care of yourself. When I deemed you were down I found you were one that I missed," — and he extended a friendly hand to the younger officer, who took it in surprise and some contrition on his own account. After all, both were fighting in their own way for their King, against a common enemy. Perhaps it would not do to be too particular in regard to each other's way.

The men in the leading files were unfeignedly glad to see him. Nothing cheers the heart of the private more than the knowledge that his officer is with him shoulder to shoulder, and sharing danger alike with good fortune, and here was one whom they had seen laid low, and yet pluckily forging to the firing-line once more. The leader of the scouts came up to him, saluting.

"'Pears like they've all cleared out, Lef-

tenant. We-uns have n't got a shot for hours."

"I wonder why? They don't seem to be the men to do that without cause."

"Er reckon not," drawled the other, with a glint in his eyes. "Fer one thing, thar's more on 'em now, so they can't git along so fast; so they want ter keep more swamp between us than befo'. They've got a good head to the gang, I'll say that for 'em; an' I'm beginnin' ter believe that we'll ketch up with 'em sometime, but it'll be jist when they-uns are got good 'n' ready, 'n' not afore. Me 'n' my men hev' been a-trailin' a good bit ahead, 'n' I'd like the Leftenant ter kim out with me yawnduh. Thar's sumthin' thar I'd like ter show 'im."

With an inquiring look, Lord Egerton readjusted his sword-belt, borrowed a rifle from a ranger, and started forward.

"Yo'll hardly need thet gun, this time; an' yet I'd know. Yo' moughter. Kain't nowise tell, jist."

The lieutenant's military eye took in at once the lay of the ground beyond the knoll they were crossing. Evidently it had been

a camping ground for a considerable force, more conveniently chosen than their own last resting place. Here on the knoll were traces of outpost duty; ashes of a fire in a hollow where it would not be seen; a tree-trunk near, carved with runes of the historic age, a particularly befeathered Indian armed with scalping-knife and tomahawk falling in weird stiff-leggedness before the onslaught of what seemed meant for a backwoodsman in a cocked hat; a semblance of a gallows, from whence swung an individual with huge epaulets, and a queue, beneath which for identification the learned wizard had first inscribed "Corn," then partly erased it and began again with T A R, which in turn had been left unfinished for other business. Nor were gentler thoughts absent. On a smooth spot was inscribed a huge heart surrounding significant letters, —

although who the absent "Sally" was there was no sign to say. All these were so written that he who ran might read. But a little apart from the rest, by so much distance as might mark the space between the halting-places of an officer and his men, three trees grew together; and with a caution now already habit the lieutenant glanced that way and spied, half hidden, another heart, delicately carved in the smooth bark of a sapling that thrust itself thither; and within its outline two sets of initials, —

All of which clearly was not war, and they gave a certain lieutenant in His Majesty's army odd thoughts, mainly located in far away Devonshire across the broad seas. But they were not what the scoutmaster had brought him up to see.

"If the Leftenant 'll look thar he 'll see whar the fires were last night; 'n' if he counts he 'll see that we 've rolled 'em up like a blanket inter quite a sizable bundle o' men. Er reckon thar 's all o' six hunderd camped yere. 'N' another thing. Kim here a minute. Jest feel o' them ashes. Leftenant, this here was a hull little army — most big enough to fight we-uns — 'n' them ashes not five hours old!"

And Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton's eyes glowed with the old tigerish battle-light once more, when in turn by the lieutenant it was told to him.

"We 'll have them, now, before another sun!"

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW STUART AND THE REAR-GUARD CAME IN TO REPORT.

THERE were greetings in plenty as Colonel Washington and his troop rode into the bivouac of Morgan, just after the fires were lighted. It was a larger force by quite a number than when they had left it. Many an old comrade shouted a welcome to one and another among the men and hospitably proffered a first bite at a slice of hot bacon, or a nibble at a cold pone, while the leader of the partisans made his way onward to report.

"Sile, yo' ol' turnip, howdy?"

"Rube, what for yo' got yo' haid a-soakin'?" — thus impolitely referring to the bandage around the swampman's brows.

"Hey, Gavin! is the fightin' good? Climb down hyar an' tell we-uns all about it."

"How fur off is Tarleton?"

And that, after all, was the one important question which all wanted answered then and there, at Morgan's fire and at the sputtering logs around which Ike Yocum, and fringed and tasselled mountaineers like him, squatted; and at both, practically, the same answer came.

"We 've toled him on, an' stood him off an' made things interestin' like, about as long as it 'll pay. We did n't have ter git his mad up any, cos he keeps that a-bubblin' right along; but the bubbles are 'bout ready ter kick by now. An' he ain't half a day behind. Come a streak o' good country an' he an' his fore-guard 'll ride right inter us."

"Sho! We-uns ain't quite ready for that, seems if!" and there were sober looks cast around the fires.

"That so? Oh, well, then ther cap'n and some more of us 'll hev ter ride back a piece an' take it up agin. But we 'll hev some o' that bacon fust. Any o' you-uns what ain't too tired mought give our nags a rub down for us, er reckon."

"Right, fellers!" and hospitable hands grasped the reins and made room for the weary raiders.

"How 'd the cap'n turn out, Sile; good fer anythin'?"

"Ask Rube. I 'm a-yeatin'!" and Silas Turnipseed engulfed a section of pig of a size suitable for one of his longitude.

"How about it, Rube?"

"Thunder! No feller has any business ter ride with *him* what kain't fight like a she-bar 'n' hang on like a possum to a gum-tree! I kim so nigh ter Tarleton hisself that I smelt brimstone. Lay thar right under his nose, with my hoss dead an' a crease along my head big enough ter lay your leetle finger in, an' jist sense enough left ter drop behind the saddle an' try fer a last shot, with the other fellers goin' it like streaks.

"Ther cap'n looks round an' begins ter count noses. Yer kin tell mine as far as yer kin see it, an' he could n't see it. 'Whar 's Rube?' says he. 'Knocked over,' says somebody. Next minnit, durn my skin if he did n't come across the sa-

vanna a-skimmin' like a hawk, an' fore I knew what was up I was being a-toted like a pickaninny back ter the boys, an' that ar black hoss on a dead run at that. I never heerd tell o' sich a thing in all my life, and sartinly never expected to be one in such a muss, 'n' I don't want ter be agin.

"Let me tell yer what, fellers,—don't yer ever git inter no scrap with that cap'n. He don't wear a huntin'-shirt fer nothin'. He 's got a grip wusser than a bar. It 's ekal ter a bar-trap. I kin show ye ther marks o' that grip somewheres on my hide yit. But I 'll tell yer what, fellers, that Tartar 's a hoss ! ! ! — An' er reckon the cap'n 's clean good enough fer Tartar. An' when it comes ter shootin' he 's jist ther deadest shot that ever was ; an' there ain't one of us fellers in that lot that rode out with him what would n't foller him right inter Charlest'n if he said so ; an' we 'd hev a right ter expect ter kim out in our own saddles, too, I 'll tell yer what ! ! "

The light of another fire was shining brilliantly up among the branches of a giant hickory, making their shadows the

blacker by the contrast, while in a sheltered nook which its warmth pervaded, General Morgan sat as diligently at work on his rations as the humblest man in the troops. And like him, his rations consisted of cold pone and hot bacon, while in quantity it might well be improved.

"Well, Colonel?" was his prompt question, as Colonel Washington dismounted and saluted.

"The British are about half a day behind us, General. Thus far they have kept in a pretty compact force, so all we could do was to make them come on with some caution and as slowly as possible. Half a day off for their footmen, of course; an hour of hard riding for my troop. They were in camp when we left, and we rode ahead for a safer place to bivouac, not knowing that we should find you so near."

The general's eager face clouded.

"Too near; altogether too near, as yet. Men come in slowly, Colonel. We are far from strong enough to fight a battle. And yet this retreating business is utterly hateful work. Oh for one more regiment of the

line like those Maryland men! I must send you back again, Colonel, with fresh men, after you are rested. Tarleton must be delayed until we are a little stronger and in a better place to fight. I have hopes — I have hopes!" — and he broke off abruptly, his eyes taking an eager, far-away look, as though already he could see the land of promise and his men in battle array.

"If you do not mind, General, I will keep the men I have. They know their work."

"As you please — if they can stand it. How about that captain?"

"The best man in the country for what we have to do," was the prompt reply.

The general lifted his head and stared full at the speaker across the fire.

The colonel took up the silent challenge.

"I mean it, sir. Marion himself could have done no better and might prove less subordinate. For guard-work at the rear of a retreating army, delaying the enemy, keeping his own men in good cheer, and saving them from loss, I have never seen his equal in the lower ranks. And he is

modest about it to a fault. I tried to find out where he learned it all, but could get nothing out of him save a remark that no man could be a private for years under General Washington without learning something. He was entirely right, there!" — and the colonel reverently lifted his headgear.

Morgan gave a half-dissatisfied "Hum!" Then — "You feel sure that he is true?"

"It is my belief, General, that it would be safer to charge a troop of tories single-handed than to ask that question doubtingly in the hearing of the men of the rear-guard. We know he is true, as you will, when you see him fight."

"Well," said the general, drily, "I'll wait till then."

Thus ran the talk across and around two fires, where those who were led and those who led held converse; but there was yet another fire around which dwelt those who filled both rôles as occasion served, and where the greeting was to the full as hearty as the one, and less full of care than the other, as Stuart strode up to it after a

good-night pat to his horse, and found himself shaking hands heartily with Major Burnet and others, lieutenants and captains.

"Welcome, lad! thrice welcome," cried the major, cheerily. "Pone and bacon are thine, and more! for we can share with you what is not elsewhere to be found in this little army, to wit, pone and possum! What have you been doing?"

"Riding, Major. Hunting men as one hunts a too great pack of wolves. Giving them something to think of when they came too fast, and going slowly when they stopped to think. It is discouraging work, *entre nous*. I had hoped it was over, but we found you too soon; probably we will have to go back again. So that is possum! It smelled so good that I travelled upwind for ten rods to find which fire it came from. What have you been doing?"

"What have n't we? Let me see, how is it in the classics somewhere? 'As when a lion strikes a caravan and rends the fallen oxen, and lays waste and terror through the frightened camp, until the herdsmen snatch their gleaming swords and

with long spears form a living hedge of sharpened points; then he, the conqueror, angry and sullen at the need, draws off and leaves his prey, and, growling fiercely, stalks on toward his lair, casting grim glances oft from side to side; and now he halts as one in mind to charge, then at the raised shout of — of gathering guards he starts anew, but slowly, on the chance that one more venturesome than others be beguiled and come within the reach of spring and claw.' So we."

There was a shout of laughter as the major ceased his exposition and applied himself vigorously to a possum-rib.

"Whereabouts in the classics do you find that, Major? Cæsar? Or is it a free rendering after Virgil — a long way after?" came the ready jibe from a college-bred lieutenant, with his arms full of fuel for the fire.

"It does n't matter where, men," laughed a burly captain. "The major has hit the mark squarely in the bull. The best shot alive could n't better it. General Morgan has been growing madder and madder with

every step he retreats; and every time a party joins us his eyes light up and he half halts, and counts heads, and then with most almighty slowness concludes we are not yet strong enough to whip a force as large again as we are, and the danger is over for that time. But I would bet two darkies — if there was one left on the plantation — that he won't wait for an even match, but will give Tarleton odds when he gets good and ready."

"Do you suppose Cornwallis will have anything to say about that?" commented another.

"Why should he?" asked the major, pausing, rib in hand, "corn-cob fashion." "According to the plan, General Greene is to look out for him."

"Plans get mixed sometimes."

"His don't!" replied the major, emphatically, — "at least, not nowadays. Or if they don't carry through, somehow he seems to get what he is after just the same. I for one shall lose no sleep over that."

"I did think that we would have made

a stand at the Pacolet," observed somebody, "but I suppose it was too near Cornwallis."

"Rather," replied the major. "Besides, there are too many fords and there were not enough of us. Tarleton might have flanked us on both sides. We did not know then just where he would cross in force. That's where young Brent and Twing went — to watch different fords and bring news if any."

"We ought to have kept General Davidson with us," grumbled Captain Young, whose iron-grey hair belied his name. "That Indian scare that took him off home with his men was all a British humbug."

"Very like, very like. But that's part of the game. A diversion at the rear is always effective, and if a redcoat general can't spare regulars for it he's willing to take tory; if he has n't tories then he tries Indians. It's a frightful thing to a man to hear that redskins are let loose to butcher his family, so don't blame Davidson or his men. But after all it never pays, in the end. I venture to say that it was the en-

listment of Indian allies that ruined Burgoyne. But for that he might — possibly — have been allowed to march clear to Albany. As it was, he set the whole country in a flame that consumed him. And, after all, his Indians did n't fight worth a continental."

"It seems to me," remarked Captain Young, reflectively, "they did fight, sometimes, and to deadly purpose, too. Take Braddock, now. Of course that was a long time ago. But have n't we somebody here from the North who can tell us at first hand about later affairs?"

"How about that, Schuyler?" demanded the major. "You 've seen service there. Ever have any Indian fighting?"

"Rather," replied Stuart, quietly. "I was at Oriskany."

"Tell us about it. Much of a fight? Did they stand?"

"I 've seen nothing like it in the war, and never want to again. I was a private, then. Thayendanegea, — Joseph Brant was his English name — he is a Mohawk chief, — caught General Herkimer and about eight

hundred of us in an ambush, at the bottom of a ravine. The Indians came with a rush at our rear, while a large force of tories struck the van. And right over all, in the midst of the fighting, came a most awful thunder-storm that wet our powder, and it was bayonet and tomahawk, let me tell you! We stood them off, but I 've seen no fighting like it since. Stony Point was as nothing to it. And they fought us to a standstill.

"We were bound to Fort Stanwix, then besieged; and we had to give it up, and go back short a third of us and our general down. He died later. I heard afterward that the plan was for Colonel Gansevoort to make a sortie from the fort, as arranged by messenger, while we were to come up at the enemy's rear; but the messengers did n't get in in time, and we did not wait for the signal as we should have done. It was not so bad as it might have been, after all; for the colonel heard the firing, guessed what had happened, and made his sortie with brilliant success, sent tories and redskins flying, and brought into the fort over twenty

cartloads of arms and other spoil, including five British flags; and it took a deal of life out of the siege from that time on. But that did not give us back our general, nor the men who were lost, nor me the years it scared out of me. Since then, if only a pine-cone falls, I know the reason why before I drop the matter."

"Why, Schuyler! I had no idea that you had seen that sort of service! No wonder the general sent you out to watch Tarleton. It is just the work for a good Indian fighter."

Stuart smiled slightly, and looked at the fire.

"I hardly think that was the reason, Major," he observed, after a pause.

"Why not?"

"Because he never heard of it."

"Humph!" grunted the major, slightly discomfited, and then, returning to the charge: —

"Well, if that is so, all I can say is, that I have still more respect for General Morgan's good eye for a man!"—to which Stuart made no reply, but continued gaz-

ing at the fire; but all the while he was thinking, —

"I wonder what the major would say about that if he knew that the general practically ordered me shot!"

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE REAR-GUARD AND STUART WATCHED FOR TARLETON.

SOMEBODY once asked a soldier what was his hardest duty, to which he replied without any hesitation whatever, — "Getting up in the morning!"

One lies down to rest, rolled in his blanket, if he has one, weary with marching, aching with fatigue, and falls off into a dreamless sleep. Some ten seconds after, according to the sleeper's arithmetic, he is roughly shaken and sits stupidly erect to find the stars still shining, the ground covered with a rime of white frost that outlines the folds of his blanket, his limbs stiff and grumbling at every joint, and no enthusiasm for fighting in his soul. And by and by, in its own good time, the sun gets up and thaws things.

Stuart's little squad were old hunters to a man, but even they grumbled and growled audibly at their early start that morning, Gavin Paynt being almost the only one who took a cheerful view of matters.

"'T ain't so really bad, er reckon," he urged, "when yo' come ter look into it."

"That 's what Satan said o' Purgatory," snapped Ike Yocum, angrily stamping some life into a benumbed foot. "It all depends on the pint o' view. Now he was accustomed ter wuss."

Gavin eyed him attentively.

"Let 's see: er reckon I 've met yo' befo'. Name is Yocum, ain't it?"

"Right."

"Thought so. Yo 're richer 'n' when I saw yo' last."

"How 's that?" and the hunter looked up suspiciously.

"Why, by that valley farm that 's yourn."

"Mine? Why, what 's come to them others?" demanded Yocum, excitedly. "There was four brothers ter hev it 'fore it come to me!"

"All gone. Bob he had a misery in the

chest. Jake had a difficulty with some tories and fired too slow. The Injuns got Pete. An' as fer Jim — he was the only one that died wot yo' mought call a nateral death."

"Eh? What 'came of him?"

"He was hung for hoss-stealin'."

The shout of laughter resulting awoke them all up to take a brighter view of life, while Yocum joined in the laugh and meditated a deep and deadly revenge against Gavin as soon as he could think out the details. As to the four departed relatives, they and the valley farm alike were products of the imagination in a game of wits. But it served.

"We do not march with the rest, boys," said Stuart, coming hastily to their fire, "so you need not hurry your breakfast."

"What are we-uns ter do, Cap'n?" asked Rube Yadkin, respectfully.

"Keep an eye to the rear, the same as yesterday. We are only a day's march from the Broad, and if we are caught this side of it before we can ford there will be trouble."

"That 's so, Cap'n, shore! But it 's a lovely kentry round thar for a fight, an' if only we could git more men! Hit 's a great place fer cattle, or was, afore the war."

Stuart nodded thoughtfully. "Perhaps we can still delay matters till men can come to us," he said. And after the little army with wondrously slight bustle had packed up its few belongings, and with no lagging stride was well on its way toward the Broad, he bade his men mount, reinforced by a few fresh comrades from the mountain men, and leading them at a swift gallop along the back track wherever the riding admitted it, he found opportunity to give Tarleton's vanguard something to think of for hours which Morgan was using to the utmost profit miles away. Then the firing ceased, and back they came as fast as they went, and as far as their former camping ground.

Stuart halted them at a little knoll, which seemed the best spot for an outlook that he was likely to find, and the horses were lightly hobbled in a little grassy hollow beyond.

It became very still where had been tramp of hoofs and rustle of garments. At a word from Stuart, the men of the guard took up their position in a sheltered spot between two cradle-knolls, masked from the south by a clump of low spruces, through whose boughs their own view was not at all obstructed. There, in easy attitudes of comfort, they watched as patiently as hunters at a deer-lick. And the hours rolled by.

Stealthily around the deserted camp-ground the small denizens of the forest ventured. The querulous, harsh scream of a porcupine came, once and again, from the heart of it, and the castanet-like rattle of his teeth. Then — oh, joy! he found among the leaves a lost bit of bacon; and thenceforth his life was one long wonderment as to when and where he was likely to find another. For blissful minutes he had been in paradise.

Busily flitting from fire to fire, a couple of jays quarrelled over pone crumbs, and leaped aside with looks askant as under the dry leaves another crumb-lover made a sudden dart, secured the prize, and vanished, leav-

ing the fighters to meditate over lost opportunity and the benefits of peace.

Up on the knoll, so near that Stuart could have covered him with his hand, a fawn-coloured deermouse peered cannily out of a round hole at the bottom of a funnel in the leaves, and stretching out his neck, with cautious sniffs and quivering whiskers, stole inch by inch into daylight. Presently sitting up, he rapidly rubbed his nose with two white paws like fairy hands, and looked up confidingly into Stuart's face. The latter would not have stirred suddenly for worlds, lest he frighten away his guest; but with his free hand inch by inch he reached his haversack, and with the same caution brought to light a few crumbs, which one by one he snapped enticingly before his mouseship, until with confidence gained the little wood-spirit was dining sumptuously from a store of them that lay in the hollow of a soldier's hand; all of which did not prevent the owner of it from casting a long look southward at five-minute intervals.

But such pleasures were for the educated

soul, content to restrain the instinctive desire to kill common to all animals that prey, and glad instead to have the opportunity to take pleasure in the graceful poise, the lovely colouring, and the trust and confidence of this lilliputian of the wilderness. The swampmen had no such resource to fall back on, and time lay heavy on their hands.

"We-uns mought hev a game o' seven-up," suggested Ike Yocum, tentatively toying with a package which to those long familiar with it was recognisable as a pack of cards — and, it must be said, as easily read by them back side as front side.

"Nary!" and Gavin shook his head.

"Why not?"

"Twar keerds that let us give that picket o' Tarleton's sich a joyful s'prise, over yawnduh. 'T would look kinder pretty now, would n't it, if we-uns went and did the same fool thing an' let them creep up on us."

"We kin keep a lookout an' play too, er reckon."

"Not in this squad, Ike, yo' can't. Ther

cap'n, thar, fer all he 's so young-lookin', has trained in ther reg'lar army, an' knows what 's what as well as ther next man. My land! yo' orter seen ther way he drilled them Maryland men in Gineral Greene's camp! That company he had was ther stiddiest in the hull army. Fer all he 's a-lookin' off so sorter dreamy like, an' takin' no notice, the fust deal round yo 'd hear from him, sho'! An' if yo' want ter see just how asleep he mought be, break that bit o' twig thar, an' you 'll find out."

With a grin the unbelieving Yocum picked up a dry stick and snapped it between his fingers. On the instant came the stern, low call, audible but a rod or two away: —

"Quiet, there, men! I had thought you were all hunters."

And when the low chuckles had subsided, Yocum shook his shocky head threateningly at Gavin Paynt, saying, —

"I 'll lick yo' fer that, Gavin, as soon as we cross ther Broad."

Then, by way of consolation, he drew his hunting-knife and began to ornament the

nearest tree, looking curiously at the captain, who seemed to be doing likewise, from time to time. Suddenly he noted that the young officer's occupation had ceased, and although he had not changed his position there was in his pose an air of intense attention. Then the others turned in surprise to find the velvet-footed captain standing over them.

"Gavin, where are your ears?"

The native shot erect and alert, and listened intently.

"I can't hear nothin,' Cap'n," he said; and the other listeners said likewise.

"Well, I can; and you will soon. They're coming at last!"

"Sho' enough," said Rube Yadkin, presently. "Hit's more a tremble nor a sound, tho'. Ho! what's that rumble?"

"Artillery, Yadkin," said Stuart. "Tarleton has some light guns with him, and he has brought them up from the rear. Let me see! The rumble isn't massed enough to be many, nor clear enough to be but one. Probably he has two or three only."

"Is that why he comes on so slow like, Cap'n? I thought Tarleton allers went like a harricane."

"Not this time, Yocum. He could n't raise eleven hundred horses in all the Carolinas just now. A good share of his force must be infantry, — probably the larger share. And if my ears and eyes don't deceive me they are going into camp beyond that swamp! It 's a good place, for they can't be rushed on three sides at least. Turnipseed, you and Yocum slip down and saddle up while we wait a little and see how far their outposts come. — Ah! there they are. They 're prompt. Tories, by their dress — and their promptness, too. Never mind, they 're bound to rest, for they must be weary after all that marching since we last struck them. Now, boys, steal away quietly! We won't have to burn powder to-night. The longer they stay there the better we 'll like it!"

And quietly as ghosts they glided from tree to tree. No sticks were cracked now. Stuart's men were not regulars. The generals would have classed them as militia;

and so they were. But they were also veterans. Like militia, they were especially good at running when that was the business in hand. In their character of veterans they also knew to a dot just when it was advisable to run, and when to stay. The trouble with the most of the militia lay in the fact that they had not learned this last lesson, as a whole, and so their running capacity was the part of their education which had been best developed. But they had lucid intervals, as it was; particularly in places where they could n't run for good, though local reasons, such as a precipice or a deep sea.

No; old campaigners as Stuart's hunters were, save one or two who took their cue from the rest, there was no flurry or unseemly haste about their going. Girths were cinched up with due care, bridles adjusted with steady fingers, and when one or two would have mounted, a muttered caution from Yadkin, or Turnipseed, or some other old hand nearest to the recruit, checked the action until the young captain came gliding down among them

with an approving smile and nod as he noted each man standing by his horse's head with hand on muzzle, ready to check whinny or neigh.

"Mount, men!"

And at the word each man with scarce a rustle slipped into saddle, gathered rein, and at a word from Stuart stole silently out of the hollow with Gavin Paynt at the head; while in the rear, last of all, rode the captain, keeping ever a keen ear for sounds in the far distance which might betoken pursuit, and a habitual side-glance right and left lest some overlooked scout of a tory might think the last man in the troop a safe enough target and try the accuracy of his flint-lock.

Miles further on, after many minutes of swift walking, Stuart and Gavin changed places, and "Forward, all!" was the word, hard along the plain track of the retreating army. But the men ahead also were travelling fast. The shadows were long already, and yet they had not been overtaken, and Stuart was about to spur on the faster, when suddenly he checked his horse sharply and

threw up his hand, bringing his own men to a sudden halt.

"What is it, Cap'n?"

Gavin Paynt by this time would not have asked that question. He would have waited to be told, as would Yadkin, Bill Swint, or any of his original command, who were fast and proudly taking to themselves the attributes of well-drilled men. But Stuart ever was gentle with pure ignorance, and replied kindly: —

"A fresh trail, Yocum. Don't you see it? There is another party following the army ahead of us. There is where they turned into the trail. Irregulars, of course, for see how they spread apart, and each took his own course through the sedge. Here, Gavin, can you count?"

"No, Cap'n, doggone if I kin," replied the man with humility.

"Can anybody?"

"I kin, some, sah!"

"Good! Well, Turnipseed, ride along the edge of the army's trail with me, and see if my count is correct as to this party ahead of us. What do you make it?"

"Wall, Cap'n, hit seems ter me there mought be a right smart lot, somewheres about two hunnerd."

"Ah! I made it about one hundred and fifty."

"Either number is too many for us, so keep a good eye ahead, Gavin, and ride with me. Forward!"

And on they went again, although somewhat more cautiously than before.

"Thar they be!" said a dozen low voices some time later and simultaneously, as they topped a gentle rise, and as with a single hand each horse was brought to a sudden halt and made to go backward till only a head could be seen by any one looking back along the trail.

"Beg pardon, Cap'n," said Gavin, suddenly.

"What is it?"

"Them 's our folks, not tories. I kin see two or three that I know; an' that man on the bay hoss is Pickens. Hit 's all right, shore. They 've come ter join."

And so it was. And when Pickens and his company of one hundred and fifty men

came into camp that night with Stuart's little troop unnoticed in their rear, Morgan leaped from his seat with his face aglow with enthusiastic fire, and in that second resolved not to retreat another rod, but to fight right there! And yet on the one side was the oncoming army of Tarleton, known to outnumber his own, and on the other side the glare of patriot camp-fires lit the dark, sullen waters of the Broad, across which in the face of an enemy there could be no retreat. It seemed a death-trap for that little army! Yet to Pickens, Colonel Washington, Howard, and other officers who were in his confidence, he whispered with hearty enthusiasm: —

"It's the very place for us, the very place! The militia can't run, they've got to fight! And if they'll stand long enough for only two good, low volleys, that's all I'll ask of them; then, Howard, your Marylanders can be trusted to do the rest!"

And the tanned face of the officer of the line flushed at this public praise of his tried regulars, the flower of the army. Even

Stuart came in for a word as he came forward to make his report.

"Ha, Captain, are you back? How much time have we?"

"Colonel Tarleton, sir, probably will reach here by daylight."

"Good! — and, Captain, Colonel Washington speaks well of you. I shall mention your services to General Greene. Get a good rest to-night, for there will be fighting to-morrow."

Then leaving Stuart as nearly dumfounded as he could be in the midst of his men, who, to a man, were grinning from ear to ear, the general was off toward the nearest fire, where he slapped the first man he came to on the back like an old friend, and told him the news with a zest and delight which was irresistibly contagious; and far into the night he passed from fire to fire, once more a laughing, rollicking boy of two hundred pounds' weight, poking one under the ribs, tweaking the long hair of some coonskin-hatted mountaineer, stirring up the whole group to cheery laughter by some happy joke witty or practical, until

the whole bivouac was resting in the most contented frame of mind that ever possessed an army that was about to fight. And when the general, his duty done, at last rolled himself in his blanket for a brief rest, no man heard him whisper devoutly to himself, —

"Pray God that the militia stand to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW COLONEL TARLETON LAUGHED AT CAUTION.

"WE 'LL have them before another sun!" said Tarleton.

It was about the middle of the afternoon, and men and horses had had their rest, and were stepping forth lively on their way. Here and there in the little squadron of cavalry a rein unconsciously was tightened and the horse's nose rubbed for a moment against the crupper of the horse ahead. Here and there a plodding tory as unconsciously grasped his swaying powder-horn and glanced ahead with an eager scowl from under his low-drawn hat. Forward to the van rode Tarleton himself, too impatient to be content with a more backward position. Then, too, Lord Egerton was there. Of course there were other officers by tens under his command; but they were all old

stories. Nothing new or stimulating could be derived from their conversation, and they were shadowed by discipline. Egerton was like a volunteer; he was friendly with Cornwallis. Cornwallis was an earl. Egerton was ever a cheery, even-tempered young fellow, really liked by his associates because he was such a genuine good fellow; also, he was a lord. So the colonel on his second mount splashed his way onward to where he found the lieutenant sharply scrutinising an offensive-looking thicket just beyond gunshot.

"See anything?" he inquired eagerly.

"Not yet, sir; it looks suspicious, that's all — yet."

"Pooh! we must n't balk at mere suspicions. Here, you!" to the nearest soldier — "Run out there and draw their fire."

The man hesitated a second, looked appealingly at the face of the colonel, in which he found as much sympathy as in a stone idol, then drawing in his breath sharply like one who is about to plunge into an ice-bound stream, he broke from cover, and with a sharp cry that echoed like a hawk's scream

among the trees he made a rapid dart toward the thicket, tacked suddenly to the right, then zigzagged to the left, and brought up breathlessly behind a huge stump which flanked the copse. Not a leaf had stirred, nor a shot followed. Carefully they saw the man bob his head out from cover for half-second looks, then make a dash for a nearer trunk, then walk boldly out into the open and vanish behind the thicket, reappearing and waving his hat.

"That 's the way!" said the colonel, approvingly. "We cannot spare time to flank every thicket in the Carolinas."

What would have happened to the man had that thicket been tenanted evidently did not trouble him. At saving men the lieutenant was the better man, which was one reason why the men of his escort were ever so ready to follow him.

Something caught Lord Egerton's eye for a moment, and spurring ahead and to one side he paused to examine it, signalling to the scout-master to join him. The colonel overtook them as they were studying the signs.

"See, Colonel, yonder dark line winding through the thickets. It is a regular road, so many feet have traversed it. A little regiment has joined the rebels, and not so very long ago. There is a tuft of grass that a horse snatched and partly ate, and it is n't dry yet."

The colonel's eyes glowed as he took in the various details, but he said nothing, contenting himself with a swift glance backward to note the progress of his own men, with a reflective look, as though meditating if he possibly could get out of them another mile per hour.

Suddenly he asked the royalist, —

"Smallhorn, how far is it to the next wide water?"

The scout-master reflected a moment.

"I kain't tell fer sho'. If the Cunnel gits along right peart hit 's about half a sun from here ter the Broad. The rebels are bound ter cross that or fight. They kain't nowise do both."

"Come on, men!" was Tarleton's abrupt reply as his horse plunged forward under the keen spur; and again the van was making up for lost time.

No man in all the host was more eager than Lord Egerton, and right loyally he rode onward at his leader's back, using both eyes and ears, however, in a watchfulness that had been inculcated in him deeper in this campaign than by all his earlier soldiering; and he had seen considerable service, too. There was the making of a good officer in him, — if some impertinent rifleman did not interfere. He even ventured from his quasi-guest and volunteer status to make a suggestion to the lieutenant-colonel as a huge collection of pines compelled a slower speed.

"Shall we not send a courier back to Leslie, sir, and obtain his support? It is clear that very soon the enemy will be run to earth."

"Pooh! nonsense! Leslie is leagues away; and if he was n't we have no need of him. This is Lenew's Ferry, over again. Gods! how we cut them up there! We 'll do better yet this time, Leftenant, unless the Broad belies its name, for here they can't get across so easily with us behind them."

"That is exactly what I was thinking

of, sir," the lieutenant urged, respectfully enough. "Men like those that we have been chasing are not men to let us do all the work. They are running now, it is true; but get them where they can't run and — did you never see a cornered rat? I have!"

"They are rats! Good, Leftenant!" — and the colonel's white teeth showed. "It's a happy comparison; but we are all too strong to need such care as that. Remember that a running man is always a demoralised man, and when he is run down he has lost his head."

"Well, sir, I must confess that ever since I was a boy I have had the heartiest sort of respect for cornered rats. Their ways are sudden, and various."

The cavalrymen rode on for some minutes in silence, cogitating.

"But these are not rats, after all, but Yankees," he said at length, as if that was a satisfactory conclusion; and Lord Egerton deemed it advisable to say no more. He was with Tarleton "to see service," and must not complain if the "service" was varied as well as extensive.

He glanced around him for a moment, and backward. Three or four horsemen were riding well ahead with one eye on the terrain beyond, the other keeping in occasional view the scout-master, and in obedience to his gesture exploring doubtful thickets, spreading out in the glades and openings, closing in, dismounting, and leaving one to lead on their horses where the forest came down around them. To the rear, in a close group, rode a little knot of men in scarlet, — the lieutenant's own escort from the 63d, which stayed by him like a burr. Beyond, the undulating files of cavalry were hiding the forms of the hurrying foot. All of them, however, hard, seasoned men, veterans of many a fray, were trudging along with the sturdy British determination existent still, though so many of them were British only in blood and never had set foot on England's soil. As he looked and noted their eagerness overcoming the fatigues of the toilsome march, his own spirits took an upward cheer.

"They're fighters, too, every one!" he muttered to himself, and he drew back a

moment to give his men a chance to overtake him. Their familiar faces were like friends in a crowd of strangers.

"We are having quieter work, Sergeant. It is hours since we have even heard a shot," he said, with a genial smile.

"So we are, sir; may I make so bold as to ask the Leftenant what is to be the end of it all? Have we drove the Yankees out of the country?"

"Hardly, Wilde; somewhere ahead of us there is a large river, and the colonel is hoping to overtake the enemy before they cross. If we do, he expects to annihilate them then and there."

"That's good news, sir!" — and the faces of the men within hearing brightened up at once. "A real good slashing fight, sir, is just wot we need. This here bush-fightin' is kind of demoralisin' to the men, so to speak, specially when we don't seem to make no headway. The trees get about all our bullets, or if we make a hit the feller's friends carry him off with 'em and we 've nothin' to show for it."

"Well, we shall have fighting enough,

men, if we do catch up with them, — I feel sure of that. Now remember, you came as my escort, and I want to take you all back with me if I can; the colonel can make use of me as an aide, and as we have comparatively few cavalry it is likely that he will expect you to act with the rest as such. I need not tell you to do your duty, — I know you'll do that; but I want to caution you to keep together, to wait for the slowest horse, to guard particularly against allowing yourselves to be strung out in a scattered line, and when we charge, to keep the sharpest eye out for two things, — your neighbours, and the nearest rifleman. The one may save your comrade's life and give him a chance, perhaps, to save yours a minute later. For the other, keep your pistol ready in reserve as long as you can, for you are likely to have no time to reload. That is all, I think. Now, Sergeant, I must join the colonel. Something is brewing, apparently, and he may need us."

Tarleton and the scout-master were in earnest conversation still as Lord Egerton rode up.

"Hit 's a fact, sah, thar ain't no place as I knows of for miles ahead so good to camp on as right hyar. Thar 's water, 'n' some grass sich as 't is; an' win'falls of wood a-plenty. Also, good spots for sentries. I 've camped hyar befo' when we had Injuns ter stand off, an' some o' the folks ahead are mighty nigh as bad."

"But there is an hour of daylight yet for marching, man!"

"Yo' kin put that on t' other end of the rest, sah," remarked the man, drily.

"Thar hain't no place within an hour's march whar I 'd sleep a wink this night, sah!"

The lieutenant-colonel frowned impatiently, and gave a far-away look into the distance through the gathering shadows. He hated to halt, yet felt that the man was right if the country was as he stated, which he had no reason to doubt.

"Take a look at the trail," he said suddenly, "and tell me where at this hour Morgan is likely to be."

"I 've been studyin' that already, sah," said the man, quietly, with the respectful

pride of one who knows his business. "Hif Morgan 's done what he 's likely to do, he 's almost reached the Broad. The water 'll be high, most likely, an' the men dog-tired. He orter cross to-night, but then he 'd be a long time a-doing it in the dark, an' nowise safe — mought get his powder wet; an' anyway he 'd have to go inter camp with his men all wet; an' he knows prob'ly just whar we-uns are. So he 'll go into camp right thar, and cross about daylight in the morning."

"He will, will he?" and the cavalryman's eyes sparkled. "Leftenant, you heard? Pass the word back along the line that we go into camp right here. Tell the adjutant with my compliments to consult the scout-master here and post the sentries under his advice, — he knows the ground, and it will save time. Order the men to lie down at once, details excepted, and get to rest without delay. Serve out extra rations, and warn the men that we march to-morrow morning at three o'clock. Tell them that this is the home-stretch, — it will hearten them up. See

that they have ammunition enough for a battle; and — er — Leftenant! the adjutant will have his hands full with all that. Do me the favour yourself to order the cavalry officers to see that the horses have an extra rub down and the best grass attainable while there is light enough for it to be found; and tell my man to pay special attention to Muskrat. I shall want him at daylight to-morrow."

Lord Egerton saluted and cantered away to execute the various behests of his veteran commander, the orders which he conveyed being received with a variety of emotions, from the general delight of the men at a chance to rest and the prospect of fighting, to the gloom of the groom who must strap down Muskrat, and who spent some valuable time trying to find a friend willing to "hold 'im just a little while" during the process. Friends of that degree of self-sacrifice were not to be found that night in Tarleton's army.

When the lieutenant returned from his missions, reported them as executed, and went to his own place, he found a little

shelter already built, firelit, warm, and snug, with a hot ration on a tin plate and a soft blanket awaiting, — silent testimonials of the regard of his men; and discarding his heavy cavalry boots and other nonessentials to slumber, he stretched himself luxuriously at full length to the somnic whispering of the wind far above him among the pines, murmuring to himself the while in sleepy happiness, —

"Oh, the blissfulness of being unshelled!"

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE THE CHASE ENDED. LORD EGERTON LEARNS A LESSON IN SCOUTING.

THE sky was overcast and dark. There was no natural incentive to any one in that host to awake at the unsanctified hour of two A. M. Nevertheless there was a heartlessly unnatural one in the person of the officer of the day, — so called, — to whom daylight and darkness were alike mere matters of detail, and not to be considered as either *pro* or *con* when there was duty to be done.

He had visited the sentries; he had stumbled along the picket-line, and had noted that the weary horses were deep in slumber, all save one wiry quadruped who alertly lifted a wicked eye in his direction, and around whom as a matter of sheer habit he made a cautiously wide semicircle, irrespective of any respect due to the

said quadruped because of his being the colonel's mount.

He had glanced at the cook's fires and had noted that the utensils needful for their simple although extra-matutinal breakfasting were arranged neatly in order, ready for instant use. It might be considered out of his province to look so closely into such matters as a part of his regular duty; but if the army was to start on a march at three A. M., and was not ready to start by reason of a delayed breakfast or any other cause, the first thing which that officer would have to produce would be a good and really sufficient reason for that delay, — one which would satisfy Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton at a moment when he at least was ready to mount. There are times when several pounds of prevention really are worth several ounces of cure. One measures potatoes by the bushel, but diamonds by the pennyweight; yet no one would object to bartering a goodly number of bushels of potatoes for one pocket variety of diamond. So in that host there was one man who was wider awake than

the sentinels; and at the appointed hour he proceeded to impart some of his wakefulness unto his happier — because sleepier — comrades in arms. Whereat he was reviled greatly. That also is the way of the world.

Nevertheless, the army proceeded to get up and breakfast. It was all a part of the business of a soldier, as each one knew; and in due time the fruits of a variegated chopping which had made echoes at sundown now became apparent, as along the extended line at frequent intervals a soldier — and his neighbours — took especial pains to see that his powder was under cover, and each thrust into a gun-barrel the end of a pine knot, or lashed it thereto by a strip of bark according to the size of the knot; while from the blazing torch thus made and held aloft the rich resinous odour of the flame drifted to leeward in writhing coils of smoke, and the red light now and then showed to a plodding foot the difference between a root and a shadow, or flashed in warning reflection from a muddy pool.

Yet now and then the leader of a file would lift his leg high in air to clear a log,

which action would be faithfully copied by each man behind him in his turn until some distant warrior both sceptical and lazy omitted the ceremony without harm, and broke the thread for the benefit of those behind him; and perhaps a moment or two later would again show his indifference to the wisdom of those who had gone before and reap his reward by a headlong plunge over a real log, this time, and not a shadow. Then was he fortunate if he received merely a verbal lashing from some irate officer, and not a whack from the flat of a sword. Such were some few of the joys of soldiering then.

And now had begun a hard, long, hurrying pursuit on through the endless night.

Hurry! hurry! hurry! — was the word. The colonel stamped it into the minds of the captains with an iron brevity of speech which left nothing to be desired in force. The captains left no man under their commands in doubt upon the subject; and the swinging tread of the little army cut down mile after mile as it tramped its breathless way; yet ever and anon the face of the

handsome colonel clouded as he looked at his watch by the glare of an uplifted torch, and with a touch of his spur set his horse plodding on yet faster as a time-beat to quicken the rhythm of the marching men behind; and many an infantryman that night cursed in his heart the fate which placed over him in command a mounted man, who did his own marching on other feet than his, and knew not weariness, nor bruised and aching muscles.

So passed the long, long hours; and the torches burned to their lashings, and their charred stumps lay smouldering by the way; and still without a pause they followed the "For-r-r'ard!" — that command that never tired. And yet here and there one found breath to hurl a fierce jest to some hurrying comrade, answered by a yet curter slang of the ranks, hot with the lust of conquest; for not one man but felt himself invincible, and ready by himself to rout a host, —such is the strength which circumstance gives to the pursuer in the chase of war. So on they plunged, headlong.

"We'll do it, yet!" the colonel fairly shouted across the heads of the files to Egerton upon the other side. "We're winning, we're beating time itself; if we but get there one half-hour before daybreak we'll drown Morgan and all his men like puppies in the Broad! We will leave not one man of them alive! Come on, men! For-r-r'ard!" and a hoarse roar from a thousand throats, harsh and thirsty for slaughter, swept growling toward the rear as file after file took up the chorus and stepped on with brisker stride, not knowing, save the foremost, why they cheered, yet spurred on by fierce, exultant undercurrent of vindictive pursuit,— a surging column of meat-eaters hurrying on their prey.

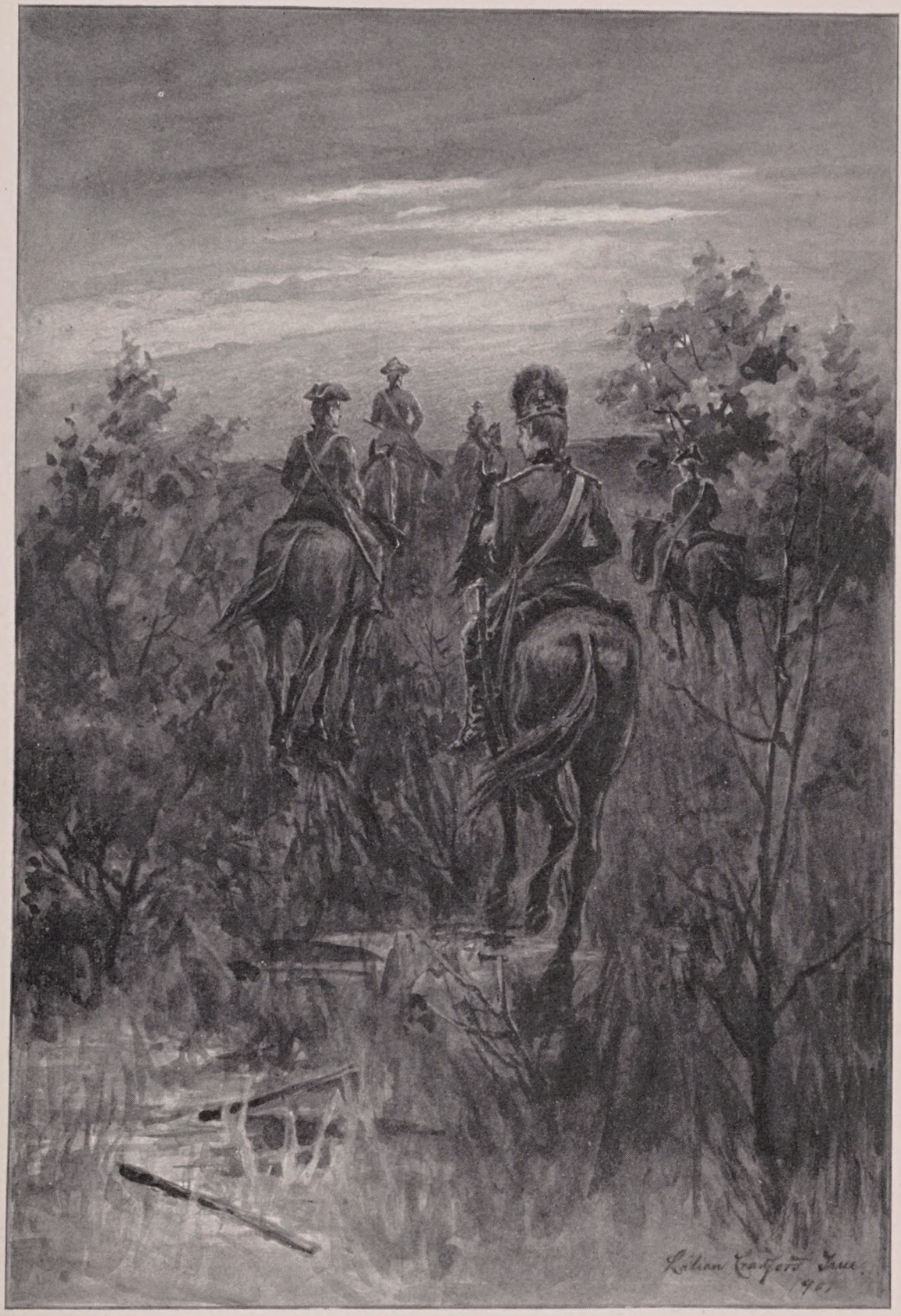
"Leftenant Egerton! we must be drawing near. Ride onward, sir, with the scouts, until you can observe the enemy. Find out what they are doing, if you can, and report. Avoid alarming them if possible."

Splash went the lieutenant's horse through a slough. No time to go round it, when Tarleton commands! With a wave of his hand, Smallhorn, the loyalist scout-master,

who had overheard the order, already had signalled to a squad of his best mounted men and joined the lieutenant with soldierly promptness. The flame from their renewed torches streamed backward and grew brighter, and their horses snorted and shied shudderingly as embers shaken from the flambeaux of the foremost fell upon their sensitive skins. Then the lights grew smaller, smaller, to pin-points; the thud of hoofs grew faint; then light and sound went out, and the regiment followed on with thoughts eager and far ahead of their plodding feet.

And what of the scouts? Nothing, for a time: nothing but wilderness. Then they were out of the woods at last and were crossing a savanna. For a brief space their way wound through clumps of thickets straggling out into the grassland like advance-posts of the forest; but presently the keen-eyed master of the guides gave a low-toned order as he passed a pool, and into it went hissing and spluttering what remained of his torch, followed by all other lights. Thenceforward they rode in darkness.

The men rode in absolute silence, their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eyes shifting hither and thither, ever falling back as a last assurance to the significant semaphores of their horses' ears. While those signals were down there was safety, so far as safety could be secured by living vigilance.

At last Lord Egerton gave a sigh of relief.

"Look yonder," he remarked. "Day is breaking in the east."

The loyalist gave a low chuckle and a steady look in the direction pointed out, then a brief, confirmative glance aloft at a single star that was gleaming in a cloudrift.

"Yawnduh hain't the east, Leftenant, nor no daybreak. Hit 's dark yit."

"Ha! their campfires!"

"Right!"

There was a sudden movement of alertness that quivered through the group. The light which had caught their tired eyes was faint, a mere glow of radiance above the thickets and far away, but the wary partisan was prompt. He knew his business.

"Yo', Batt! ride out thar a good half-mile ahead an' don't git asleep. Yo' know

what we 're after. Pike, yo' ride next forty rod behind him, an' skin the hummocks wot Batt kain't see. If yo' see a sign, Batt, halt till Pike kims up, then yo' both spread out an' snake roun'. Pike, if yo' see anything wot Batt orter know of, hoot like a squinch owel. We-uns 'll tote long behind. Off with yo', an' don't git ter conjurin', but — git! Yo' heah me?"

"Sahtin!" And without further word the two men swung their guns to a ready and disappeared in the night. Conversation among hunters while on duty is a lost art.

Meanwhile the scout-master was watching the distant luminous sky with a slightly anxious gaze. The lieutenant was nominally in command of the party, but the swampman paid no more attention to him than to a silent stone; while the lieutenant himself had the good sense to keep absolutely quiet, although tingling with the rush of good red blood which was pumping from his heart in spite of his calm placidity. Hunting was their business, to which they had been bred. His breeding had been simply as a gentleman born; and on the

whole it had been effective. At all events, it had taught him to respect an expert in the degree of the expertness. Perhaps that was why he was there, for Tarleton at times had a good eye for a man.

"Quin!" said the scout-master, suddenly.

"Hyar!" responded the personage addressed, from a little distance.

"Yo 've got good eyes in yo' haid. Take a look at that fiah."

The dusky shape seemed to shade the eyes aforesaid, and gazed steadily for a moment.

"Hit 's brighter than 't was," he said decisively. "'Pears like they 've woke up an' are brilin' bacon."

A low laugh fluttered through the group, and one or two of the men raised their heads, and sniffed hungrily.

The scout-master nodded contentedly.

"Yo 've hit it, er reckon. We 'll git thar right soon, now. Whar in nation 's Batt an' Pike? Ride ahead a bit, Quin, an' see if yo' kin make 'em out."

Quin vanished like a shadow, his horse making hardly any sound in the sodden grass.

Presently there was a sudden click! click! click! of flintlocks as a shadow loomed up gigantically and halted; then the rapid whisper: —

"Hit's me — Quin! I've found 'em. An' they've found a picket or somethin'. Yo' kain't go no furder without a fuss."

"Halt, men! 'Light, Quin, an' go back afoot an' bring in the boys. We-uns 'll look out fer yer hoss an' gun."

Then there was a longer wait, and presently from far to the right came the low hoot of a screech-owl, at which a nearly noiseless laugh rustled among the waiting men.

"Batt's done lost hisself, er reckon. Pretty feller ter send out a-scoutin'."

"No fault o' Batt's," said their leader, sharply. "We-uns 'll have moved on out er line since he left. Squinch fer 'im, Sam."

Sam "squinched" accordingly, so nearly like a little owl that Lord Egerton actually started; and presently the absent men appeared.

"Wall, Batt?"

"Thar's a little lot o' men over yawnduh

in a grove. Hit 's a picket, for they 've been thar all night."

"Sho' o' that?"

"Er reckon, cos they had a fire 'fore hit went out. Pike 'n' I both crep' round down wind an' smelt it. Smelt hosses, too. Pike got nigher an' says he heard one stamp. 'T ain't a big crowd, cos the grove 's a little un. We hitched 'n' lighted an' crep' clar round hit. Pike got most too nigh an' woke up a hoss, er reckon. I 've tole 'im he orter know better, an' when the fight 's over I 'll whale 'im."

"How did you know they were there?" asked the lieutenant, breaking his long silence and unable to restrain his curiosity longer.

Batt stared at him.

"Why, hit 's whar thar orter be a picket! When a fox finds a mice nest he don't go by without lookin' ter see if mice 's thar. If he smells 'em he knows they 're thar, an' acts accordin'."

The lieutenant smothered a laugh, and turned to the scout-master.

"Well, Smallhorn, here we are! There

are their fires, so they are found. They have just been refreshed, so Morgan's troops — or some of his men — are still there. If the most of the rebels had crossed the Broad, this picket would not have been left in such an exposed position to give warning of our coming, for our vanguard would drive them into the river. So a large force is still this side of the Broad, to which force they could fall back for protection. Do I read it aright?"

"Right to a dot!" was the reply in a surprised tone. "Yo've got sense, Leftenant. 'F you'd been brought up like we-uns you'd be scout-master yo'self by this time."

"I suppose that outpost cannot be silenced?" asked the lieutenant, tentatively.

"How about that, Batt?" and the guide turned to his man.

"Not nohow!" said the latter, promptly. "Hi don't mean for to say as how we could n't snake up close enough to rush 'em, an' p'r'aps git the last one of 'em, tho' we must expect to lose some of we-uns too, being as we've found out afore now that

thar's some dead shots among 'em. But whar's the good? Yo' kain't nowise do it without raisin' no end of a row, and that'll jest naturally wake up Morgan. Then the cunnel 'll jest naturally wake up we-uns — an' mebbe six or eight feet high, a-dancin' on nothin', fer spilin' his plans."

"No doubt you are right, Batt. Now, Smallhorn, you heard my orders — to go back and report. It is my turn for duty. Let Batt accompany me, — the colonel may wish to question him. Do you dismount and keep an eye on that picket, out of their sight, but send a line of men part-way on the back track that we may know, if need be, when we are drawing near to it. If possible the colonel will want to ride right into their camp, driving the picket before him. Do you understand?"

"I understand, sah! — keep an eye on the picket, start a man or two along the back trail, an' watch out. But the cunnel kain't ride 'em down nohow this time, Leftenant, caze thar ain't noways enough hosses fit for the run. But that's his affair, of co'se. Yo' heah, Batt! git along

with the leftenant; and Quin! yo' 'n' Pike, yo' heared. Git along on the back trail accordin'. 'Light, the rest o' yo', an' hitch."

And even as the young lieutenant started on his backward way the sky was growing tremulously grey with coming dawn.

CHAPTER XX.

GENERAL MORGAN, PANTHER-LIKE, STANDS AT BAY.

"AT last!" For the life of him Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton could not have restrained that cry, as it dawned upon him that the end of his rugged chase had come. Here was the goal which a strong, passionate man had set his heart on winning; and, no matter by how great or small a margin, yet he had won! There before him were the flying forms of horsemen carrying into camp the news, beyond doubt, that "Tarleton! Tarleton has come!" No doubt they were the men who had endeavoured to block his way in his unrelenting pursuit, and whose snares he had brushed away like spider-webs in the grasp of an iron gauntlet; and noting how few they were he laughed contemptuously, for Tarleton was young, and it is a sign of youngness to

despise one's foes without pause for their examination.

Swinging round in his saddle the commander looked rearward. On came his troops, the horses with heads down, plodding; the infantry with eager looks, but hollow-eyed and pale. Long, hard had they been marching, and weariness was stamped deeply in their mien, plain enough for any one to read who — cared. But Tarleton never cared for that. Why should he trouble to begin now? He hardly gave the matter a single thought.

"Yonder they are, Leftenant!" he cried exultingly to his volunteer aide, with a wild, uncontrollable gesture of his gloved hand sweeping the terrain beyond. "Yonder they are. Not crossed yet, by Heaven! Now for a battle at last; and if I leave one man of them upon his feet may I never wield sabre again. This is the day of a lifetime!"

Lord Egerton scanned the lay of the land and gave a dubious glance at the weary men behind them.

"Our men are fagged, to a degree, sir,"

he said. "If we were to hold the enemy in check, as we could easily do, it would give time for Leslie to come up, and so make a sure thing of it."

"Leslie be hanged!" roared the lieutenant-colonel. "What do we want of Leslie? Hold them in check, say you? Didn't Cornwallis try that and lose Rahl and his Hessians at Trenton? Give them a chance and they would slip through our fingers like sand. No! a thousand times no! I want no Leslie here. By all the gods of war, did man ever see a lovelier lay of the land for a battle? If I turned my back on this chance, cashiering would be too good for me. Forward, gentlemen! here, trumpeter, sound 'officers' call'!— Quick, men! We must give them no time to rally. Align your men right here in battle array, the left flanked by that thicket. Brannan, your squadron will form the right wing. Dent, stay here with the other on the left, the infantry between the two squadrons. Line up! men, line up!"— and the impetuous cavalry-man gave scant time to his sub-chiefs to execute the sheaf of

orders thus rapidly dealt out to them, but cut in with curt commands of his own, which made tired men forget their aching limbs and spring to place with the accuracy of the well-drilled machine which he had built up exactly in readiness for such a time as this.

"Where are those grasshoppers? Oh! here, Dupont, take those guns over yonder where you see that little pine. Try for a cross-fire when you get the range. — On with you, man!" giving a hearty rap with the flat of his sabre across the back of a footman whose haste in reaching his place in the swiftly growing line of battle did not keep pace with the colonel's ideas on the subject. And yet it was a sight to make that commander glad.

There in the rear stood in soldierly line a battalion of his best men and his steadiest dragoons in reserve. In front, artillery in the centre, stretched the thin red line of other men whose comrades on many a field and in just such a line have held back the columns of advancing foes from sun to sun. And on either flank drew rein a squadron

of hardy, seasoned riders in green, who waited but for the breaking of the ranks of their enemy when, with gallop of hoof and blare of bugle and clink of swinging sabre, they would do their part to their colonel's deep content.

"Come, my lord, let us ride forward and give them a look before advancing!" the latter cried, nodding gaily to Lord Egerton and with a gesture indicating the rest of his desired escort. "Forward!"—unthinkingly putting spurs to his horse, whereat that eccentric animal gave an electric plunge forward with a convulsive, undulatory wriggle of his own invention.

"Blast the beast! I forgot!"

With smothered laughs the other officers laid rein on their horses' necks, right and left, and swept outward in semicircle away from the dangerous locality of Muskrat.

Up the long, low slope they cantered, casting keen glances right and left, and toward what seemed the enemy beyond, crowning the low summit of the mound.

"There they are, gentlemen! Yonder 's their main line. What say you now, Lef-

tenant? Are they not too few to ask for any help but our own right arms? But — gad! they stand up well!"

They did, indeed, and they were Maryland men. And some of them had been trained, and well trained, by a young officer in buckskin, to capture whom Tarleton would have thrown away a battle; but no such officer was in the line of battle on that hill crest.

"Ah! there is the cavalry in that grove part-way up the rise!" cried Twickenham, a black-browed captain among the escort, pointing.

"Then what are all those men doing in front, between them and us?" rejoined another, indicating a line of men in homespun and yellow spread out singly and in little groups like coalescing drops of water. Here and there among them there was a twinkle of light as a gleam flashed from a long gun.

"I tell you, those are the horses of the militia, waiting till their masters get ready to run. Can't you see that the scamps are not mounted? They'll blaze away at the

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empty air for a shot or two, then they will cut stick for their mounts, and be off, leaving the men on the hill to do the real fighting. We won't have it real warm until we come in touch with them."

"Right, Burke!" said the colonel, approvingly. "But where is the cavalry? There must be some somewhere."

"Probably in reserve, Colonel, behind the hill, waiting until we are disorganised."

"Very likely — very likely. They 'll have grey heads if they wait till then, even if we let them stay on their shoulders. Well, gentlemen, time presses. I think we have seen all there is to be seen; take note of it and let your comrades know. The cavalry is *non est* — or else in hiding. The hilltop holds the main line; then come the horses, dismounted — gad, we must get you a few remounts out of them at least! — then at the foot stand the militia, all ready to run like cattle, tails in air."

"And then come the skirmishers!" cried Lord Egerton, suddenly. "Look out, sir!" and the lieutenant ducked like a flash down behind his horse. He had seen that done

once before, not many days back, by a figure in yellow mounted on a black steed, and he was intelligent enough to put it into instant practice when really needed.

"Jove, you're right, Leftenant!" cried the colonel, hastily wheeling his horse as a little shower of balls droned like bees through the group. "Hit, my lord?"

"Another miss, Colonel!" was the cheery reply. "I was too quick for them. They took off the heel of my boot, and the spur with it; and the back of my saddle looks as though the rats had dined off it."

"It does, for a fact!" laughed his superior as they galloped away from the dangerous locality. "It was well you dodged in time. They seem to have a grudge against you, or your red coat. — But it is time for business. To your posts, gentlemen. Leftenant, remain with me. Bugler, sound the 'Advance!'" and the air twinkled and flashed as Tarleton gave an irresistibly enthusiastic twirl of his sword in a circle above his head.

Oh, what a gallant, stirring sight that was, as without a pause, without a falter,

that battle rank began its onset, keeping perfect line! Onward, boot to boot, the flanking horsemen forged with jingling bridle and soft thud of hoofs upon the sod. Onward strode the silent infantry with steady swish! swish! of a thousand feet among the grasses keeping perfect time. Onward followed the reserve, still at the exact distance from the front as at the start, cool, determined, steady as though on parade before the eyes of ladies and of kings, and as his swift eyes glanced from right to left as he overlooked his stern array, —

"Magnificent!" murmured Tarleton the soldier, enthusiastically to himself.

A hundred yards had now been traversed, and the enemy was that much nearer. Some of their skirmishers had fallen back and merged with the militia's irregular line. Here and there in that line stood men erect among the herbage, men whose aim was sure, who wasted no second ball upon a flying deer, and now with iron nerve stood waiting the command, meanwhile selecting in advance this or that one as their future

mark. Here and there in little groups or singly crouched others in the grass, less sure of their aim off-hand, and taking vantage of a rest on knee and elbow; while around them fell a Sabbath stillness as they waited. And silently Tarleton's men marched on.

Back in the squadron of Tarleton's Horse, among the "old reliables" held in stern reserve, a little knot of red coats showed among the green, like a cluster of scarlet roses set in a hedge of thorn. There rode Sergeant Wilde, and with him the little group of Lord Egerton's escort, silent men and true.

"Orders" were all they cared for. "Orders" had transferred them from the ranks of Lord Cornwallis and placed them here among a troop of devils, — as more than one honest Englishman among them thought; and up there beyond them on the hillside were more devils, with whom presently they were to fight. But what cared they for that? Fighting was good for Englishmen, and after all, since they had crossed the water they had not had over-

much of real fighting. Now, perhaps, there were better times ahead; and at the thought each sat up a bit straighter in his saddle, set back his shoulders with the thought "When are Englishmen ever beaten?" and tightened unconsciously his bridle-rein only to meet the instant word from Wilde: — "Steady, men!"

In that troop at that moment no horse's head must forge beyond another's.

Riding near them their lieutenant found time to turn and give them a swift, cheery glance, a nod of encouragement, and a warning word of reminder as to his previous instructions. And each gave a side-glance of his own at his nearest comrade, as though to fix in mind just where he was in case he could give him help in the rush to come; while Lord Egerton himself, outwardly a perfect example of propriety in the eyes of men, was thinking to himself: —

"What a beastly shame it is for men to have to kill one another on such a lovely day! I wonder if that fellow, Stuart, will get another chance to pot me, or if I can get him within reach of sword?"

Here and there his eyes searched the nearing militia line beyond the intervening heads of the British soldiery, but nowhere could he identify his enterprising foeman's form. Yet there he had expected to find him, in the irregular ranks; and from there, as an officer, he might soon expect a bullet. So setting his teeth he adjusted his nerve to the doing of this new duty; and men behind him took new courage from his careless, easy poise.

From around the hill in the rear of the enemy suddenly appeared a horseman, a dot of yellow on a blot of black, topping the rise along the western slope and sweeping downward with a steady canter so long and easy of rhythm that only the swift passage of shrub and brake betrayed its speed. Many a horseman's eye flashed envy from the ranks of the dragoons, as they watched that flight along the hillside like the drifting shadow of a cloud, and Tarleton's flashed red.

Onward came the rider, nearer and clearer, until he reached the militia line; then, slacking speed, he seemed to be giving

some last word of encouragement to the kneeling men, answered here and there by a wave of a hunter's hand. Then, having traversed their line from end to end, he rode straight up the hill to the waiting soldiery, made some report to officers in their rear, and vanished from sight beyond.

As though in response, a general officer came down the hill, conferred a moment with the leader of the militia, and in his turn, like a careful commander, inspected the militia line, then cheerily cantered his steed up the hillside; and here and there among the British soldiery was whispered the word, "Morgan! Morgan!"

Lord Egerton glanced for a moment at his chief inquiringly, but the latter made no sign. He was busily watching the steady advance of his lines. What cared he for Morgan then, or for any other man?

Up among the militia here and there a man looked grimmer, if possible, than before; and from his place of command among them Andrew Pickens scanned his men with fiery eyes, saying: —

"Boys, remember what Morgan said —

don't break till you have given them two good low volleys, and he will take care of the rest. But can't we do better than that?"

And a low murmur of response swept athwart the slope, and men looked grimmer yet. Then along that line clicked a low, irregular clicking as of gigantic insects signalling, — sharp, metallic, short. It began in a second, it ceased in a second. Then again a hushed silence fell; and in the sunlight above their heads, back and forth, zigzag along the low array, wavered in flight a winter butterfly, enticed from its snug quarters by the fairness of the day.

CHAPTER XXI.

BATTLE. HOW COLONEL TARLETON MET "A REAL GENERAL" AT LAST.

"PST-PST!" "Pst-pst!"

They were well within range, now, of those standing, kneeling, yellow-clad men.

"Sluck!" — and Captain Twickenham reels in his saddle and drops into tenderly waiting arms.

"Crack!" — and Captain Brannan's horse leaped his own length forward, shaking spatters of red from a hole in his ear through which a ball had torn after glancing from a buckle in the bridle. What fatally good marks those officers' uniforms made! Already here and there a saddle was empty — fifteen, Lord Egerton hastily reported to his chief. Trained riflemen, evidently, were those skirmishers in their front, and the young colonel ground his teeth in silent rage.

But see! they are running! Nimble-footed as wolves, from briar-patch and shrub-tuft a score of fleet runners broke cover and raced for the distant militia line, chased by ironical cheers from the advancing soldiery, whose turn to fight was soon to come. It had come, for Dupont the watchful caught his fiery chief's nod, and instantly, with yells of drivers and slash of raw-hide, out into the open rushed the little battery, right in the teeth of the hostile riflemen, and unlimbering swung into action front. Ten seconds, perhaps, to catch the elevation, then two shuddering roars echoed from woodland to woodland, and from the fire-jetting cloud of smoke two cannon-balls hurtled through the militia line and went bounding and ricocheting up the hillside, ploughing a trail for themselves in the sod.

To their places leaped the cannoneers, active as cats, Number 1 wielding the sponge-staff dripping with water as black as ink. A swift pass or two, then Number 3 with his leather-armed thumb closed the vent as Number 2 leaped to the muzzle

with cartridge and ball which Number 1 sent home down the cavernous mouth of the gun with a thud. Backward springs Number I with his sponge-staff, and at the signal that all is ready the gunner in charge of the gun who gave it sights swiftly along its brazen length, and before the echoes cease two more sullen roars go crashing after them, and the iron globes go flying with splendid aim and true. Then as their comrades arrive on either flank, "Limber front!" is the word; round wheel the guns, and "Gallop!" rings the order, and with thump and rumble away they go for a nearer position yet, right in the face of the threatening foe, and the sulphurous thunder begins once more.

Number 1 threw up his arms and fell. Number 2 seized his rammer in his place; and a driver darted from the horses at the call of the gunner to fill the gap left by Number 2. Number 3 must stay to close that vent when the charge is rammed home, or a premature explosion will blow Number 1 from the mouth of the gun. Then the heavy cloud of smoke from their muzzles

masks them like a curtain, and only a chance shot rings against the metal or sends splinters flying from the solid felloes of the wheels; and their murderous roar keeps on, and on.

Onward without a shot trudge the silent infantry. Their muskets nor their aim can be trusted at that range. Onward at their flanks plod the heavy-footed horses, weary, and ignorant of danger as they are. Still the militia line in front is also silent, still in line save for the gap where they have withdrawn to either side to give free passage to the round shot. A little nearer, — they are only about a hundred yards away, — then from his place Lord Egerton suddenly saw that long line vanish behind a cloud. At the second the air around him hummed and droned like the passing of a flight of bees; then the rattling crash of a hundred and fifty rifles mingled new echoes with those that had gone before, and all along the line in front of him the lieutenant saw men plunging forward by twos and threes in groups that counted to scores. And his heart stood still. But no! brave

men they were, those others, and "Close up! close up, men!" came the hoarse commands; and on they went unfaltering, those that were on their feet! Soon they would be in reach themselves — and then! Each gripped his gun the tighter at the thought, and the bayonets glistened thirstily in the swaying line above their heads.

Again came the crack of Pickens's rifles, again and yet again, in semi-volleys, and in spattering shots, for well were his men redeeming Morgan's hopes; yet smoke, and haste, and the rage of fighting were doing their work with the aim, and fewer men than at first were falling among the advancing ranks. Then, like snow, the militia melted away.

"Huzza! men, they are running! they are running!" yelled Tarleton, exultantly. "Lord Egerton, ride for your life to the right squadron and bid them charge in chase! For-r'ard, men! For-r'ard! right up the hill and at them! There 's our mark!"

And cheering, no longer shoulder to shoulder, up the slope they raced, while the right wing, obedient to the word, went off at

full gallop after the flying militia and vanished around the hill.

Stern and silent the dark line of the Maryland men awaited them until they got the range; then like a wall of fire they crowned the little rise. Only the roar of their muskets, the stern orders of their officers, — "Load!" "Prime!" "Ready!" — and right there the charge was checked. Men fired blindly upward instead of advancing. The line surged forward for rods, then swayed back again, still wildly firing; but onward they could not go.

With wrathfully flashing eyes the colonel turned to his reserve battalion, his best, his steadiest men. Still in line they stood, awaiting orders, and at his mute gesture of command instantly they were in motion. With an oblique march they cleared the masking flank of the front line and swept straight up athwart the slope overlapping the right of the continentals, — a deadly charge. Few indeed are the troops that can stand a flanking fire; and the men of the reserve squadron tightened the grip on bridle, and stirred the mettle of their steeds

with heel and spur, waiting the order as soon as the line in buff and blue gave way.

"Huzza! steady, men; wait for the word!" cried the young lieutenant, more excited than his men. "They're breaking! They never can stand that! Steady! I told you so — there they go backward fast!"

And backward they were going; not beaten, not defeated, but swinging back to a new line as a gate swings, to guard against that deadly overlap. But others see the falling back, and without orders begin to fall back too; and quick to seize the chance, Tarleton stood high in his stirrups and shouted clear above the din of battle:

"Now, men! Now! Now! Drive them!"

Then, thrilled to mad enthusiasm, each man took the command to himself, gripped his gun fiercer, and charged home! And behind them, fretting for their word, the men in the left and the reserve squadrons swung their helmets in defiance of discipline and yelled, "Victory! Victory!"

But what is this? A thunder of hoofs and a battle roar beyond there on the right,

where the right squadron had vanished around the hill in chase of the militia! And horsemen were darting back in twos and threes, with chins on their shoulders, as though they feared pursuit; then came more of them, and a black frown swept across Tarleton's face — were they beaten? By whom? Beaten? Yea! for there comes the wreck of that squadron, with a cloud of horsemen better mounted, shouting, hewing, hacking at their rear, and driving them, wildly disorganised, in upon the infantry flank, the plunging horses spreading terror!

And what is this? What are those yellow-clad men upon their own left and rear?

"By Heavens, the militia have rallied and galloped around the hill!" cried Lord Egerton to his bewildered chief; and in that second the dark Maryland line ceased to retrograde, swung its heavy muskets to a level as one man, and at thirty yards' range gave one sulphurous volley. Hardly had the long thunder died, when loud and clear above the stunned silence which followed came the stern order, —

"Charge!"

Then through the smoke burst on the instant a line of levelled, glittering steel. Down the slope came those grim Maryland men in deadly order, straight at their staggering, bleeding, panic-stricken foes. And what was it they were shouting, — victory? No! It was more ominous than that. Small wonder that it drove the last semblance of discipline from the brains of that confused mob which had been an army; for, right and left and centre came the far-reaching cry which who could better interpret than that wrecked line, —

"Tarleton's quarters! Tarleton's quarters!"

"For Heaven's sake, away!" cried Lord Egerton, making a dive at the bridle of his chief.

It was time! Right where they stood by scores the men were flinging down their guns and begging mercy of their charging foes; by scores the dragoons were falling from their wearied horses, on which they could not hope to flee; and here and there swift, earnest voices of command were checking that murderous vengeance among

the lunging blades. And with a curse that ended in a groan, the colonel flung up his hand with a gesture of despair and turned his horse away, — he, and two or three others of his staff whose mounts were better than those of the rank and file.

Almost was he too late even now, for out from the writhing mob a giant trooper darted, yelled a rallying cry, and without waiting for further following, single-handed, plunged straight at them. Instantly the lieutenant who was nearest wheeled his horse, but barely in time to ward a tremendous blow, which otherwise would have cleft him to the chin. Like a sledge-hammer fell the return stroke, and so starkly delivered that the great trooper's less trustworthy steel was shattered near the hilt. Now it was his turn!

But ha! a new foe! Right at him came a boyish form on a spirited horse, one hand holding both reins and trumpet, the other his only weapon, and shouting, "To the rescue! the colonel! the colonel!" and at the flash of the well-aimed pistolet Lord Egerton felt a tremendous shock in his

shoulder, and his sword arm dropped as though paralyzed.

"At him, Brannan!" he gasped, wheeling out of the way, and that dragoon swung in to the fray; but a stalwart sergeant-major interposed as though he had sprung from the ground, and the captain had enough to do to guard his head. Then Tarleton, as though awaking from a daze, stared fixedly at the gigantic form beyond the struggling twain and cried, —

"It 's Washington!"

With a bound he laid Muskrat alongside the other's horse; and crash! crash! fell his blows straight at his enemy's face. Flushed with the light of battle, steadied by his peril, with a gay smile upon his lips, stroke after stroke the continental deftly parried with his few inches of blade and sword-hilt, as a Dyak chief wields his three-inch shield, fighting for time only, — all he needed to complete his victory.

But what was that beyond coming to the rescue? A score of men in yellow; and in front of them, coming like the wind, rode one with a captain's epaulettes and mounted

on a fiery black. Tarleton knew that horse's speed. He knew that rider's blade. If he was to escape at all it must be now or never!

Backing Muskrat he drew a pistol — how he regretted then the loss of his own tried weapons! — and fired full, not at the rider, but at the horse beneath; then wheeled, and sending both spurs home, away he went like mad after his few retreating friends. And after him like mad swept the gallant black, and after them the men in buckskin; and more than one or two of those flying dragoons ere long halted perforce, faced about, and held both hands high above the head in token of surrender; and they were cutting down the distance of the rest. But hark!

Far in the rear came the soft, mellow note of a horn, once, twice, thrice, in long level notes, most musical, yet never more unwelcome! and on the instant up flew the captain's hand aloft.

"Halt!"

"Why, Cap'n, we mought hev' 'im in ten minutes!" expostulated Gavin Paynt in

wrath, as on Stuart's "second mount" he angrily drew rein.

"Sorry, men!" — and by the curtness of his speech they knew he was holding in his own feelings by but a mighty effort — "Sorry, men! but there 's no help for it. You heard the recall."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REBEL MAIL-BAG, AND THE LETTER "FROM MASSACHUSETTS."

"OH — ah — hum!" yawned a sleepy subaltern, clasping his hands behind his head and leaning back in fashion most unmilitary.

"Steve, this is dull work!"

From the room beyond came a tinkle of glasses and a hum of voices in accents common overseas, though not so common thereabouts. Also at intervals came the rustle of papers.

"Depend upon it, gentlemen — excuse me, Colonel, your glass is empty; permit me! — depend upon it, this is our proper plan for a most effective campaign. Charleston is ours, Georgetown is ours, and we have full command of the sea. All of the Southern Carolinas are ours, either in heart or overawed; and in time we will press Mr. Greene backward until

he must fight. And when that comes there can be but one ending. See for yourselves, gentlemen, how the land is cut by rivers. It may be long in coming, but sooner or later we will be at his back in force, with a swollen river in his front; and when that happens, we gather into our net the last armed opposition that this part of the country can present."

"It certainly seems so, my lord; and our men are in splendid fettle. If anything, they are almost too confident."

"As we are ourselves," laughed Lord Cornwallis, rolling up the map and moving it aside. "First, we must catch our enemy. And that, we must acknowledge, has been our difficulty for some time past. However, a little more patience will do it. Let me see, — it is about time, now, I think, for a courier from Colonel Tarleton."

"Hardly yet, sir. He had first to overtake his enemy, then fight him; and hard rider though the colonel is, this time his infantry would measure his progress."

"True! true! but men march fast when hot in pursuit. I will wager, gentlemen,

that Colonel Webster is mistaken, and that the battle has been fought by now. Take note of the time, if you please! and the stakes — what shall they be, Colonel? shall we say a dinner for the staff?"

"One moment, my lord!" interposed an aide. "I shall regret to lose my share of the stakes, but I know you are too good a sportsman to wish to bet on a certainty, and from the window yonder I can see horsemen now. Their nags are thoroughly used up, so they must be from Tarleton."

"By the Lord, yes! and they don't look happy," exclaimed another officer who had a better command of the view, springing to his feet and adjusting a field glass. "Men, it is Tarleton! Tarleton himself. But where are the rest? There are not three hundred with him."

There was a dead silence in the room. Many a man in that missing army was a dear personal friend of some one in that room; so waited they, in silence, until the saddened cavalcade, weary-footed, slowly trotted into camp. Tarleton himself sat erect in saddle, and essayed a smile, as of

one beaten in fact yet not in spirit; but the air of dejection that shrouded them all was too clear to be mistaken, — and then their news was told.

Cornwallis received them pleasantly, nay cordially. He did not forget, as many do, the past successes of his lieutenant in sight of the present failure, and he endeavoured to cheer him with such cheer as the case permitted, — the hope of future vengeance. It worked to a charm so far as the colonel was concerned; but, although like a high-bred gentleman in undeserved misfortune the earl preserved a calm, unruffled front, for precious hours inwardly he was as one stunned. First Ferguson, with his strong regiment; now Tarleton, with so vital a part of his strength, his light infantry, — how many more such blows could his little army stand? And for one long, valuable day he made no counter-move in his game of war, although revolving many things. But he gathered his staff around him, and by his mien persuaded many that all would yet be well, and the loss but one of the casual accidents of war.

One thing cheered him, — the return of Lord Egerton, who was rather a favourite of his. He even essayed a jest or two at his expense.

"Here is our wandering aide at last, safe if not sound," he remarked, extending his hand. "Did you find the 'service' you went for, my lord?"

"Sir, they fought like fiends!" was the sententious reply with such hearty emphasis that the earl and half a dozen others burst out laughing.

"How was it, — your part of it, Egerton?" asked his colonel, kindly.

"We chased them day and night, sir, and came up with them at daybreak, in open country. We went at them and were driving them when they rallied and wrapped themselves right around us, and the affair was ended in a dozen seconds — so it seemed to me. Such a fustigation no army of His Majesty has received this year. Only the best mounted of us could cut our way through, save a few who happened to be beyond the flanking lines — and — the men of my escort—" he faltered and could go no further.

"They were killed?" asked Colonel Webster in a low voice.

"I — think not, sir. I hope not. Colonel Tarleton chose me as his aide, and I was with him when the crash came. When I saw them last they were still together in a scarlet knot, and, so far as I could see beyond the swarming rebels, they were still mounted, all of them. They could only surrender, and — I hope they did."

"Have you any doubt of it?" asked the earl, in surprise.

"Yes, my lord, I have; for here and there all over that field I could hear a shout rising, — 'Tarleton's quarters!'"

There was an ominous silence. Tarleton himself was silent. If he felt as he looked, however, no one in that room would have changed places with him for an earldom.

"Well, we must hope for the best, gentlemen," said Lord Cornwallis, recovering himself. "Even our leftenant-colonel sheathes his sword at times. What have you there, Captain Brannan?"

"It appears to be a rebel mail-bag, sir. During the retreat we overtook a loyalist

who was bringing it to you. I understood him to say that he had 'picked it up' while scouting around in the rear of Mr. Greene. I found he had no information that we did not possess, so I gave him a guinea and saved him the journey, which suited him exactly, as he could return and plunder some more. But I have not had time to examine it."

"We may as well look it over. Even private soldier-letters sometimes contain valuable data about the enemy's movements and condition. Let us sit down around the fire, gentlemen, while Captain Brannan reads them to us — gently, Captain, break the seals gently; we may have a use for the missives."

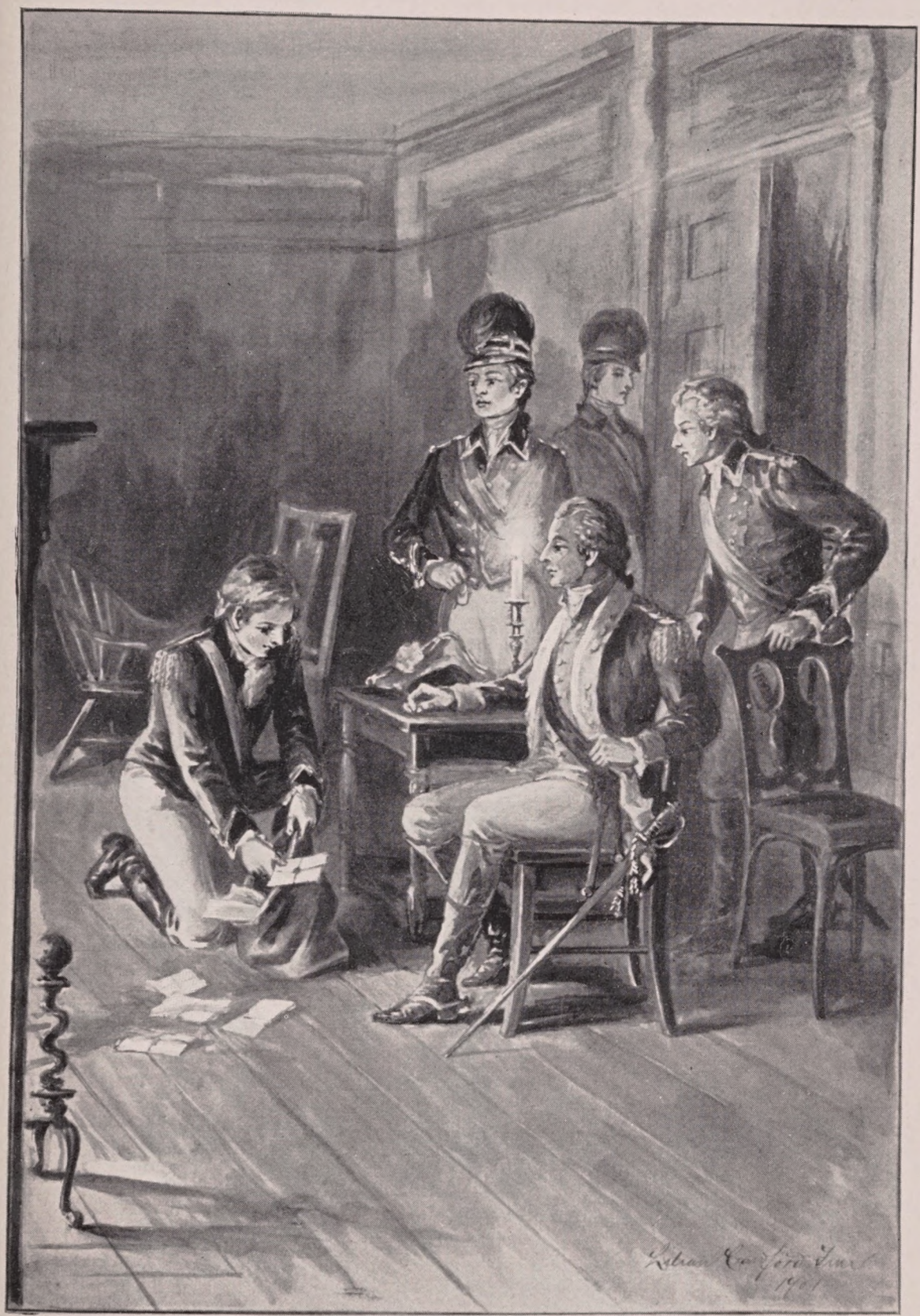
"This one seems to be a commissary report addressed to General Greene, sir."

"And the gist of it?"

"The summary shows provisions enough for a large army, but a shortage in clothing and trenching tools."

The earl nodded thoughtfully at the fire.

Quite a number of other documents were



unfolded and read, some public, more private, on the outside of which, at the earl's hint, were jotted down such data as were of value. Presently the aide took up another, paused, and called for candles, as it was growing dark. In the interim he turned the missive over, and raising it to his nose, gave several deep sniffs. A laugh ran around the group.

"Are you kissing that letter, Brannan, in default of the writer?"

"How do you know she 's that fair?"

The captain laughed.

"I don't; I can only judge. And you men are envious of my chance, for it is as daintily scented a missive as ever was sent to a member of the House of Lords. I would be willing to wager that the writer is fair to look upon and a little lady. If you will hasten those candles, somebody, you will hear it the sooner. Ah, here they are! this delicate *billet-doux* is addressed, gentlemen, to Captain Stuart Schuyler."

"Eh? What!" ejaculated Lord Egerton in amaze, whipping up erect from his indifferent pose.

"Do you know him, Leftenant?" asked the earl, in some surprise.

"I 've heard the name, sir, — before the war," the young man answered with some constraint, and Captain Brannan resumed his reading.

"DEAR, DEAR, DEAR STUART, — Your letter has just come to us by the hand of a returning soldier, and never did any play-actor in the city make such a marvellous and amazing transformation scene! Papa was poring over a great bundle of musty deeds and papers which he said would make us all wondrous rich one of these fine days; Rhoda sat by the fire braiding trace-corn to hang up in the attic for seed next year; and I, oh, I was just the idle one, poking little holes in the ashes and burying little coals, and seeing how long they smoked even when buried out of sight. Then came a stamping and a blowing in the snow outside, and a huge thump of the knocker; but I never looked around. Then I heard papa cry out just like a boy — "Huzza! huzza! it 's from Stuart!" And away went his papers everyway like snowflakes, and away went the corn-ears as though it were seed-time, and away went papa and Rhoda just dancing, Stuart, all over the kitchen floor! And if you ever saw a sailor

dance — but of course you must often, long ago.

"But oh, how thankful we were, Stuart, to learn that you had gotten safely out of the hands of that terrible Tarleton!"

"Eh? what!" cried Lord Egerton and Colonel Tarleton in the same breath.

"'Pon my word, it is so set down!" grinned Captain Brannan, and resumed.

"And how very, very odd that you should have made that exchange of that frightful Muskrat for his beautiful Tartar."

"Great Cæsar!" murmured Lord Egerton to himself, smiling, while from all parts of the room came first a smothered titter, then a laugh, which finally culminated in a hearty roar, in which even the earl had to join, the laughter smothering a sound from one quarter that was like unto the gnashing of teeth and a bitter curse.

"And now that it is all safely over, how monstrously interesting it all is to look back upon, and to think that you are now a captain! and have seen at close hand so many British officers, and some of them most famous! Papa

said that he once saw Colonel Webster, himself, and is glad to hear, even if he is a Britisher, that he is a fine, good man."

"Ho! Ho! Colonel, you 've got it now!" laughed the earl out of the chorus of delight. "Gad, the minx will be writing about me next! Go on, Brannan!"

"And Rhoda says in her outspoken way that she thinks your Lord Egerton is just a dear!"

"Now you have it, Egerton, deah boy! Who bets on the next?" came the shout, while the young lieutenant turned scarlet, and said a strong word softly to himself.

"And she hopes that it will be his turn to be captivated sometime, and when it comes, for you to send him up to her to look at, as she never saw a real live lord."

"Gad, Leftenant, we must be specially careful of you hereafter! No more hunts for you 'to see service!'" — and the men roared.

"But I know that you 'll aim at still higher game, and when you come you will bring Earl Cornwallis at your belt — or on your crupper."

"There! I knew the little vixen would n't leave me out!" chuckled the commander-in-chief. "Go on, Brannan."

"But now, dear Stuart, for the strangest thing! A little after your letter came, papa was out with his men, cutting wood, and I went with them to keep their dinner warm, and across the snow came your old guardian, Mr. Vandervere!"

"What!" cried Lord Egerton and Colonel Tarleton in the same breath, staring at the reader.

"He tried to find out where you were, and said that he had some papers to give you when you are twenty-one, — which of course we knew before, although he did not know I knew. He was very provoking in his questions, so I fear I was not as ladylike and civil as is becoming — but he was so provoking! But I remembered in time for you, and told him anything he might write you we would forward when we could, so he went away again, looking pleased; and papa said afterward that he must have come ever so far — clear from New York, just to find out about you, and then went right back again.

"We are having fine skating and sleighing.

To-night the moon sheds a flood of light over the earth, silvering the snow-covered trees and housetops and revealing the ice-covered pond like a darkened mirror surrounded by myriads of diamonds, filling one with gratitude to the loving Father who delights to give his children beautiful things to enjoy. I wonder if you are sitting before the campfire at this moment thinking of home friends, as I sometimes sit before the fireplace and dream, and pray that soon, very soon, this long, cruel war will end."

"That's all, General; there was just room on the paper to squeeze in the writer's signature, — 'Pearl Hathaway.'"

There was a momentary silence. The general said, rather dreamily, as though to himself, "She is a pearl."

Perhaps he, too, was thinking of home and friends.

A voice broke in on their silence, one thick with passion, —

"General, I want that letter!"

"Why?" — and the earl looked up, surprised.

"With that in hand as evidence, if I ever lay my hands on that fellow again I'll

hang him, hang him! hang him — higher than Haman!"

"General, I protest!" — and Lieutenant-Colonel Webster straightened up his soldierly form, taking the same words out of Lord Egerton's mouth.

"I protest against making that innocent girl give evidence so fatal against her sweetheart. It would ruin her life forever and a day; and we are not here to war on women."

"To hide it is treason!"

"It is not!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, you are forgetting yourselves. Colonel Tarleton, your idea is technically correct and does credit to your military education. Colonel Webster, your idea does equal credit to you as a gentleman. However, Colonel Tarleton has yet to catch his man, and many accidents of war are likely to intervene, while as Colonel Webster so rightly says, we are not warring with women. I think the public service will not be harmed if we ignore the contents of this particular letter; what say you, gentlemen — all? Aye? Lord

Egerton, I will ask you to make a transcript of Captain Brannan's notes, restore all the private letters to the mail-bag, and retain possession of it until we are conveniently near to Mr. Greene's forces, when I authorise you to convey it to him under a flag of truce, and with my compliments. And now, gentlemen, we march in pursuit of Morgan at daylight on the morrow. To your duties, and God defend the right."

But oh, the wistful, burning glance with which Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton eyed that mail-bag as he passed it on his way out, and moodily sought the quarters of the remnant of his chosen men!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FLAG OF TRUCE, AND HOW LORD EGERTON AGAIN MET CAPTAIN SCHUYLER.

"WHY, Tom Ludlow! where did you drop from?" and Captain Schuyler sprang forward to clasp with both hands the long lieutenant, grinning broadly down upon him from his superior height.

"Just got here, Stuart, with the general. We heard of your little fight on the Broad and left everything to come on and look after you. Made a hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies, and did n't wiggle much out of line, either. What have 'you-uns' been doing?"

"Just the prettiest fight I ever was in, Tom. I wish you could have seen it! Splendidly planned, well fought, and right in the open against a superior force; and when we got through, we had more prisoners than we had men! That tells the

story. It ought to make General Morgan immortal."

"'T won't, though! There were n't any congressmen in his council, and they are the only immortals, you know."

"Hush! don't talk treason, Tom. What are you here for, anyway?"

"Oh, just to look after you, take general command, and such small things. Cornwallis is n't likely to rest a minute, you know, after such doings as you fellows have been at. I expect he has been marching right lively on your trail ever since. You ought to be grateful to have us relieve you of responsibility — but you don't look it," and the staff-officer gave a smile suitable to a staff-officer.

"Thanks," replied the young captain a little drily. "We might have worried along, I imagine. If you have come to take your share of the scouting, however, I shall get more sleep, perhaps."

"You do look a little worn, Stuart, that 's a fact," said his comrade, scanning him closely. "Well, just you put in a claim for rest and I 'll take your share for a day

or two. Staff duty has n't made me forget how. Hullo, what now?"

Far away to the south, in the direction of the Catawba and from beyond it, came the mellow twang of a bugle, softened by distance till the notes were pure and sweet. Nevertheless, Tom Ludlow's keen ears detected something quaint in the notes of that instrument, and he remarked placidly: —

"That bugle 's out of tune — miles too flat!"

Stuart started and said hurriedly: —

"That fellow is sounding a 'parley,' Tom! I must tell the General. Good-bye — till later," and he started on a run for headquarters.

"Excuse me, General, but there is a bugle on the south bank of the Catawba sounding a truce."

Both generals turned from their conference.

"Ah, Captain Schuyler? I am glad to meet you again. A parley, did you say?"

"Yes, sir; and I may say that the bugle is Tarleton's."

"Now you say it, I thought I had heard that trumpet before!" said General Morgan, smiling. "And not many days ago. Shall I send an officer out to see, sir?"

"Yes, if you please; but not the captain, here. From what I've learned I believe Tarleton would violate a flag of truce itself in order to lay hands on this young man," and General Greene smiled genially at the somewhat confused face of the youth.

"Faith," laughed Morgan, "I don't know what grudge he has had against him in the past, but he certainly has one now, sir! I don't know any man among us who has made more trouble for him during our retreat than the captain. He was Colonel Washington's right-hand man, and I am glad to be the one to tell you — for reasons that we need not discuss."

"Good! I am very glad to hear this of you, Captain. I shall see that General Washington hears of it also. You may retire, now, if you please," and Stuart with a medley of feelings hard to describe, "retired," accordingly, from the presence of the man who had practically ordered him

shot, and now thus publicly reinstated him with their commander-in-chief.

Meanwhile, on the south bank of the Catawba a small bugler sat on his horse as haughtily as the herald of some Black Douglas of old, awaiting a reply to his summons. He led a sumpter-mule, and carried a white flag, while by his side rode an officer in scarlet.

"Hello!" came the shout from the bushes beyond the water.

"We carry a message to your general!" was the return.

"All right, kim over. The ford's right thar!"

With splash and flounder the reluctant beasts were compelled to enter the swirling flood, which was perceptibly higher than a few hours ago.

"You will wish to blindfold us, I suppose?" said the new-comer, pleasantly, saluting the officer in charge of the guard.

"Oh, Lord, no! what's the use?" was the indolent response. "Before you-uns git hyar we-uns 'll be gone. Kim along as you are."

So the envoy was permitted to use his eyes as he chose ere reaching the camp.

But there was nothing to see of which he could make use, so the lack of caution perhaps was not so great after all.

Dismounting and coming to attention before two commanding forms, the envoy was a little in doubt which to address, and began hesitatingly: —

"Pardon me, gentlemen; I have a message for the general-in-chief from Lord Cornwallis."

One of them came forward, with stately dignity. "I am General Greene, sir, at your service."

The lieutenant saluted.

"I was present, sir, at the recent battle, and the earl has permitted me to inquire after the fate of my mounted escort — about a dozen men of the 63d. They were in scarlet uniforms and would have kept together."

"How about that, General Morgan? can you enlighten him?" and Greene turned to his junior.

"Oh, yes, I remember them. They gave

our men a deal of trouble," returned the other reflectively.

"Did — any of them — survive?"

"All of them. Don't fret about them, Leftenant. They are safe."

The young officer's face lighted as though a load had risen from his heart.

"But were not some of them wounded?"

"All of them, I believe, before they gave in. But none seriously; mere flesh wounds. You do well to inquire after them, for they are good men, and a credit to you, Leftenant."

"I thank you, sir," — and the young officer coloured as he heaved an irrepressible sigh of relief and turned to General Greene again. "I had hoped that some might have survived and I ventured to bring some clothing and money. May I ask the favour that this be forwarded to them, sir?"

"With pleasure, Leftenant."

"I thank you again, sir. My other errand is — I picked up a mail the other day. Military letters of course we retained, but the private letters to your officers and men the earl requests me to deliver to you

with his compliments, deeming that the public service will not be harmed by such action."

"That is very kind of the earl, sir; and in behalf of my subordinates I tender to him my compliments and grateful thanks. Kindly assure him that if opportunity to reciprocate his courtesy arises it shall not be lost. The letters shall be cared for at once. That is all? Then, Leftenant, we shall be glad to have you as our guest during the day, for you can hardly rejoin your command to-night, — not from the distance," he added, in reply to the surprised look of the envoy, "but because the Catawba has been rising rapidly, and by this time is impassable. Yonder little fellow, your bugler, who is eying us so imperiously, would be carried down stream like a bubble. I will detail an officer for your entertainment. Let me see — "

"Pardon me, General, but may I ask if you have a certain Captain Stuart Schuyler in your command?" said the other, rather eagerly.

The general smiled.

"Have we, Morgan?" — looking quizzi-

cally at the other general, who smiled broadly in reply. "I see you have; kindly send for him."

In a moment or two rapid steps approached, and Stuart presented himself, with an impassive face, although expecting nothing less than a detail with the rear-guard again to watch for his watchful enemy.

"Ah, here he is! Captain, one of Lord Cornwallis's officers is here inquiring for you," and the general wheeled his broad form by the right flank and uncovered the scarlet figure of the envoy.

The captain stared, completely taken aback for at least five seconds, then held out his hand eagerly.

"Why, Lord Egerton! as sure as I am" —

"Jack Stuart!" cut in the other, with a laugh. "I am very glad to meet you, Captain, and on a peace footing for a change. How is Tartar?"

The captain looked inquiringly at the generals, who were smiling down at him from their gigantic height. Greene nodded kindly.

"Take care of him, Captain, until the

river permits his crossing. I see I can leave him safely in your charge" — and the young men respectfully withdrew, the bugler less haughty, but more mystified than ever at the ways of his superiors, but eying with boyish awe the two giants in general's uniforms whom he had been watching from his retired post.

Then the two young fellows took a good long look at each other, smiling at their own thoughts, which were many. Stuart introduced his guest to his bosom friend, Lieutenant Ludlow.

"You ought to know him, Leftenant, for he was with me in New York when Colonel Tarleton chose me out of a whole city-full to curry his horse that day."

"A thing he has regretted often enough since," laughed Lord Egerton. "I don't mind telling you, Stuart — ah! — beg pardon, force of habit, you know, Captain — that ever since you bequeathed to him Muskrat you have been a thorn in his recollections. I'm inclined to think that he has nightmares over you about once a week."

"You can keep to the habit, Leftenant, if

you like," smiled the other. "My best friends call me 'Stuart,' and we ought to be as good friends as the war will permit. But I ought to say that that exchange was not so one-sided as it seemed. In spite of his temper, I noticed that the colonel rode Muskrat in the last battle, and I don't believe there was another horse in your lines who could have kept ahead of Tartar for so long a time till we had to go back at the sound of the recall."

"Ah, that was a terrible affair, that battle," — and the young fellow flushed. "We have not ceased to wonder how it happened even yet. Let's not talk of that. Do you know, we seem to have seen more than a little of each other in a singular fashion since first you came South. I happened to be visiting the colonel just when you made your dash at his outposts near Ninety-Six — oh, see here! did not you deliberately set a trap for him then, baited with Tartar? You did? I thought so, and have won my bet. Confound it, though! my man is a prisoner now, and can't pay up. Just my luck!

"Then I was with the vanguard that chased you and your men, and saw you rescue that fellow whose horse was killed. 'Pon my word, Stuart, that was the pluckiest thing I ever saw done in my life!"

"Eh? what was that?" cut in Tom Ludlow, with interest.

"Oh, nothing to speak of," cried the captain, hastily.

His guest chuckled mischievously.

"Never mind, Leftenant; if he won't tell, you can ask that lengthy party yonder with the blazing head. That hair can't be mistaken, and you'll find he'll know all about it. But tell him to wear powder or a wig next time; a raw plough-boy could n't miss such a butt."

"Then that was you that cheered!" said Stuart, involuntarily.

"Rather. And the colonel put me under arrest for it, for encouraging rebellion," smiled the other. "And as a reward for my appreciation, a day or two later, you came within a hair's-breadth of putting a ball through my head. I've got the mark there yet," — pointing to the scar.

"Close work, sure," commented Tom. "But you were lucky that it was n't closer yet. I may as well tell you that when Stuart draws a bead on a target it is n't often that he misses by that much; and I don't quite see how he happened to then."

"You can score that to Lord Egerton's credit," said Stuart, smiling. "He baffled some of my best men before I tried my hand, and they insisted on my trying because he 'knew too much to be left around loose.' I 'm glad I did n't know who you were, at the time. If I had, I should have ruined my reputation as a shot, then and there."

"Thunder, I should hope so! It 's quite enough for you to be sending such reports of me up North, without spoiling my beauty — such as it is — into the bargain!"

"Eh? what?"

"Yes, 'what!'" mimicked the other in mock wrath. "And a warm time I had of it at headquarters, when it got about, let me tell you."

"What on earth are you talking about?" cried Stuart, thoroughly mystified.

"Well, I'll explain. We captured a mail-bag, the other day," — the lieutenant paused, for the captain had given a perceptible start, and a rich wealth of colour was creeping over and through the bronze of his face. "In that bag was a letter, and — oh, hang it, it's too real for jesting. I can't carry it out! I thought I might meet you, Stuart, so I just brought it along. And here it is, not much the worse for wear."

Stuart took it in silence, with a little tremble of his usually steady hand, turned it over, glanced at the first lines, then wringing his guest's fingers till they tingled he leaped to his feet and strode hastily out of sight among the pines. Some letters must be read apart from any eye but God's, for they are sacred. It was hours before the two lieutenants laid eyes on Stuart Schuyler again.

Meanwhile, right and left, as they chatted, Lord Egerton had ample opportunity to see how rapidly an army could prepare for the march; and as the swift, methodical preparations went on apace without a pause, with scarcely a shout of command, he no

longer marvelled at the difficulty which his own forces had met in their attempts to strike a blow at their elusive foe. Soon the little clearing was barren of men, save a small group of powerful fellows, mounted on the best of horses, and clad in the now familiar yellow. The river, as he knew, still was high, but falling rapidly. Soon it would be time for him to go. Yet he displayed an odd reluctance.

"I hate to say good-bye to you, Stuart, old man!" he cried at length, when the time indeed had come. "Of course I know it must be; you believe one way, my duty lies another. But I hope we both may live through it till peace comes again — and perhaps I may be introduced to that witty little lady Rhoda in some other guise than as the captive of your bow and spear. Who knows? Well, it must be. God be with you, gentlemen, and defend the right."

Silently the little bugler sat upon his horse, marvelling still at the manner of men with whom he had been sojourning; watching the straight, well-uniformed figure of his officer in befitting scarlet, clear-skinned,

steady-eyed, yet casting glances still, here and there, with the growing habit of a watcher; and that other wiry figure in buckskin, whose epaulettes showed signs of forest wear and rain, whose eyes were never still, but rested on you for the quiver of a second, and then were flashing glances hither and yon, quick as the dart of a humming-bird, from point to point, to whom the distant falling of a leaf was known and noted at its worth.

Then with a splash the two horses entered the turbid flood and made their slow way toward the other side; and as they rose dripping from the stream and their riders turned, a rider on a powerful black waved his hand cheerily in farewell. Then in a breath he too vanished, and the other bank lay green and peaceful, silent, as though there was no such thing as war. And what was to follow lay with the years to come.

THE END.

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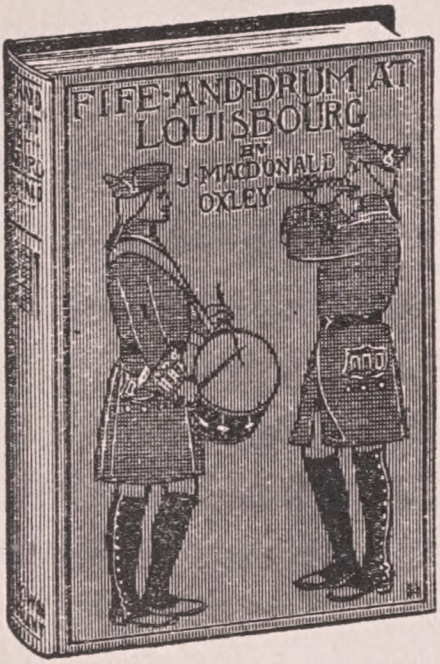

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